

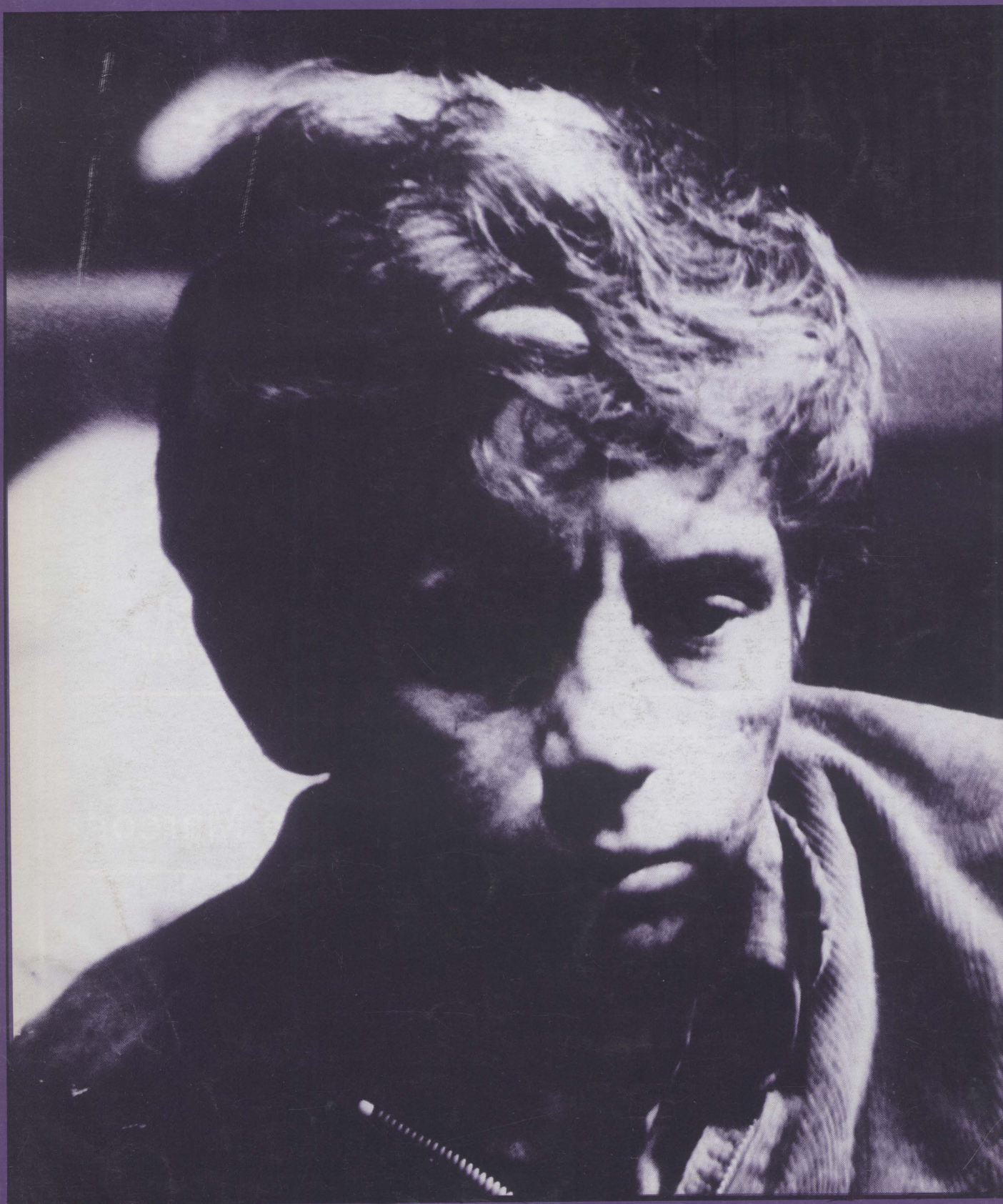


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AUTUMN 1977

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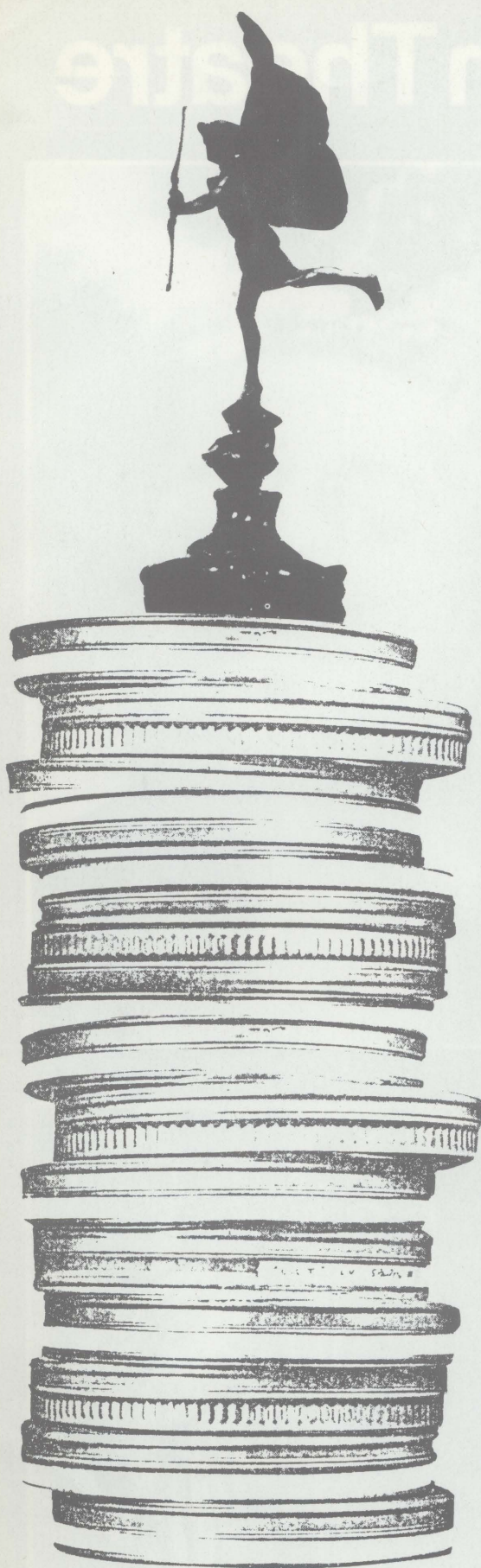
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21st LONDON FILM FESTIVAL Nov 14- Dec 4 1977

The London Film Festival, the major cinema event of the year in England, will this year include the Grand Prize winners from many of the major competitive film festivals and have sections devoted to new as well as established directors and to short films. The London Festival, which is the "Festival of Festivals", is composed primarily of the best new features and shorts from other international festivals with additional LFF choices. This year the 21st Festival will include the British premieres of some 70 feature films, and there will be a spotlight on British independent cinema. One of the features of this year's Festival will be the number of films directed by women. The Festival programme booklet will be published in late October. Among the films expected to be on show in the London Film Festival are new works by Satyajit Ray (*The Chess Players*), Larissa Shepitko (*The Ascent*), Marguerite Duras (*Le Camion*), Theo Angelopoulos (*The Hunters*), Frederick Wiseman (*Canal Zone*), Sohrab Shahid Saless (*Diary of a Lover*), and Marta Mészáros (*Nine Months*). Works by newer directors will also be featured strongly in the programme including *The Sealed Soil* by Marva Nabili, *Trás-os-Montes* by Antonio Reis and Margarida Martins Cordeiro, *Sven Klang's Combo* by Stellan Olsson, and *A Thousand Muted Songs* by Claudia Holldack.

The London Film Festival is open to the general public and tickets are available at the National Film Theatre from 9th November. Members of the British Film Institute receive advance notification of the Festival programme and can send in their postal bookings at the end of October. Full details about membership and the Festival are available from the Box Office, National Film Theatre, South Bank, Waterloo, London SE1 (Tel 01-928 3232/3) or from the Membership Department, British Film Institute, 81 Dean Street, London W1V 6AA (Tel 01-437 4355).



The Ascent



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AUTUMN 1977

Volume 46 No. 4

SIGHT AND SOUND

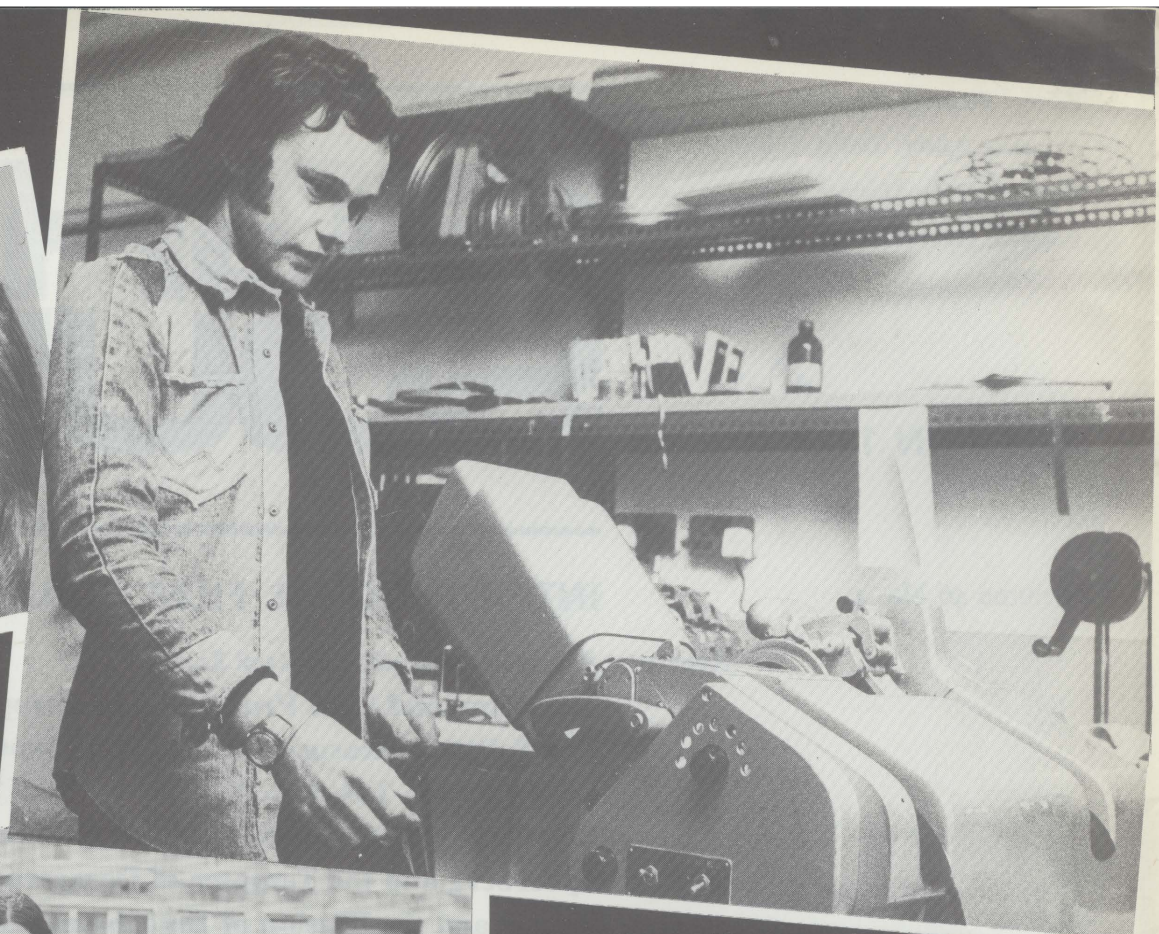
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On the cover: Stephen Archibald in Bill Douglas' 'My Way Home', the third film in his trilogy for the B.F.I. Production Board

SIGHT AND SOUND is an independent critical magazine sponsored and published by the British Film Institute. It is not an organ for the expression of official British Film Institute policy: signed articles represent the views of their authors.

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AFTER



What follows is the testament of five recent graduates of the National Film School. A different group could have said different things—more or less pessimistic. But what is apparent is their energy and their passion for film and television. They are not just mercenaries looking for a new battle—any old battle.

As I write I know that Roger Deakins recently shot his first feature, that David Griffiths took a Grand Prix at Cannes for his commercials, that Ruth Carter (graduating this year) has an NFDF grant for her first feature (with Ben Lewin), that Malcolm Mowbray is directing for Graham Benson at the BBC, that Tony Attard has two, three or more feature scripts going the rounds and will eventually sell one of them. And some of the others? Nick Broomfield and Joan Churchill, after *Juvenile Liaison* (for the BFI) and *Marriage Guidance* (for Thames), are working on a film inside a California prison. Jeff Perks contributes to Omnibus, Jonathan Lewis completes *Before Hindsight* and at least one other has a pre-production deal for a feature with the BBC. And so on.

We can make these lists, and it is not a bad record. But we can still measure the gap between what they have been able to do and what they could do if the conditions were right. At Beaconsfield we put faith in the reforms of the British film industry which are now being discussed everywhere, and in the prospects for improvement in television which are envisaged by Annan. Perhaps we are naive. But we certainly don't think it can all be put right by changing a few things on the surface—more radical reconstruction of at least the film industry is necessary if we are to survive. And some nerve is needed. Probably one of the most important things that can happen at Beaconsfield, or at any such school, is that people have the time and the chance to get up their nerve, and to look for what can be the right way for our cinema to develop. Survival is not enough.

COLIN YOUNG

SCHOOL

Contributions by Jana Bokova Chris King
Steve Morrison Mike Radford
Diane Tammes
Edited by Karol Kulik

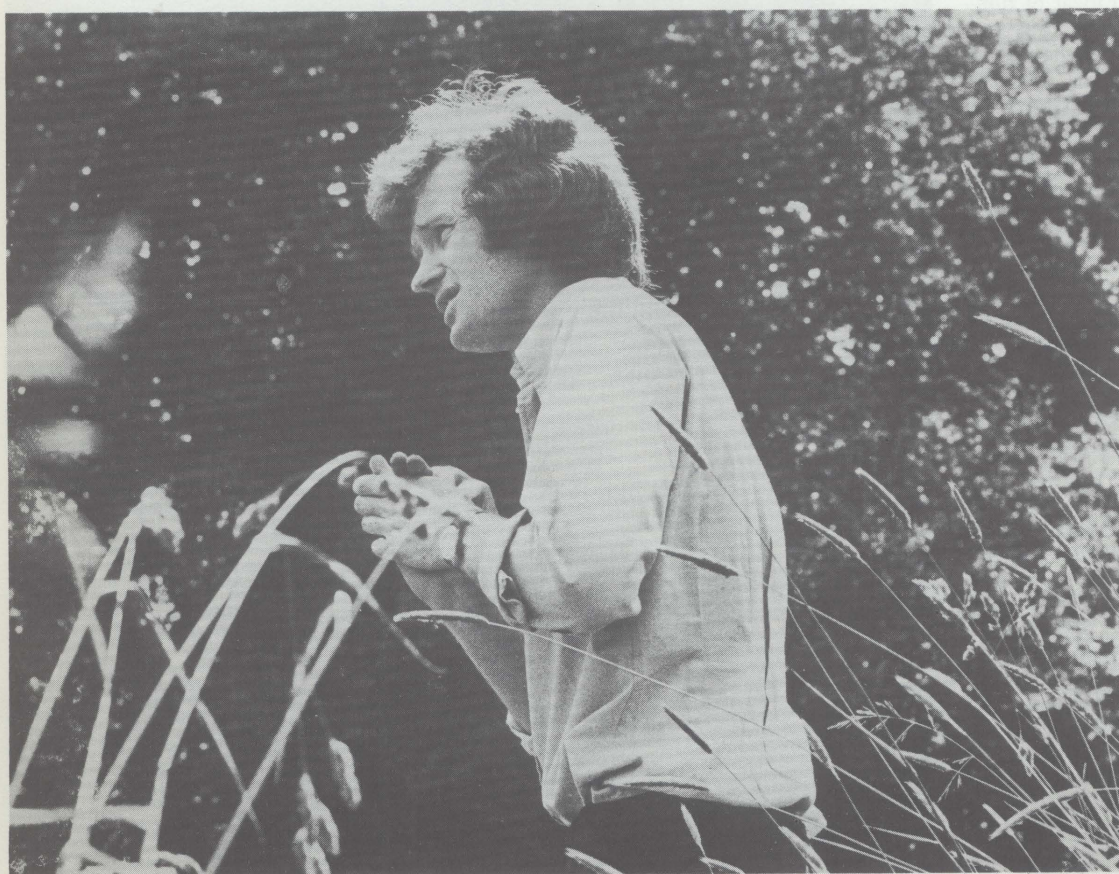
Each of the five contributors to this article has already established an impressive record of work either in television or on independent features. Mike Radford has directed several documentaries for television, including *Unità* and *The Madonna and the Volcano*, two recent BBC Omnibus films, and he has also been working on feature film projects. Jana Bokova directed the ATV documentary on photographer Don McCullin, as well as a film for the Arts Council, and is now finishing a film for BBC Omnibus. Diane Tammes was the camerawoman in the all-women crew which shot *Some Women of Marrakesh* for Granada's *Disappearing World*. After shooting several films for the BFI Production Board, including *Riddles of the Sphinx*, she has returned to television to work with Roger Graef on the *Decisions* programmes. Steve Morrison has produced a number of programmes in his capacity as producer and editor of such Granada series as *World in Action* and *Granada Reports* and has just been appointed editor of Granada's regional programmes. Chris King has directed two films for television, *The Healing* and *Kites*, and has recently co-produced five fifty-minute programmes about the life and times of *Twn Sion Cati*—the Welsh equivalent to *Robin Hood*—for BBC Wales.

'Creativity is not a mellifluous spirit hovering in the air. It needs to be nourished with money in adequate amounts. It also requires the right artistic conditions in which to flourish.'

—THE ANNAN REPORT

'Under the circumstances, you become a conniver—not a creator.'

RAYMOND CHANDLER



Opposite page. Top left: Jana Bokova; top right, Mike Radford; centre: Diane Tammes shooting 'Riddles of the Sphinx'; below: Steve Morrison. Left: Chris King

Colin Young is Director of the National Film School; Karol Kulik, author of a recent book on Alexander Korda, now works as research librarian at the School

MICHAEL RADFORD

I went to the National Film School with joy in my heart. It seemed to me that the very fact of its existence meant that someone, somewhere, believed, perhaps for the first time, that cinema was an important part of our national culture, that a new film industry was going to emerge out of the ashes of the old, and I was grateful, because I felt that I was being given a chance to participate in this. I spent three years of my life experimenting with narrative forms, developing ideas—and better still, confidence in those ideas. Since I left, I have made seven documentaries, mainly for television. I compete for work in a stagnant industry with those who are already in it. Maybe, occasionally, I have a slightly better chance because of a certain curiosity, maybe sometimes less because of a certain hostility. Certainly I have a better chance than those who will follow me out of the School, because they will crowd an already overcrowded situation as the number of job opportunities remains almost static. But the real tragedy is that I am not engaged in what I was trained for, what I gave three years of my life to, what I thought for the first time people were really interested in—a native British film industry.

When I left, this dismal prospect was somewhat allayed by the sheer joy of making movies professionally—of earning money doing what I loved doing, and knowing that I was competent to do so. But now, two years later, the truth is staring me in the face. I am really no nearer making a feature film, and the prospects are nil—unless I leave the country. Most of the projects which I have, though they would be taken seriously in other countries, are not considered to be the real meat of film-making here. The only area where any sort of creative freedom might be allowed in the making of a feature film is the BFI Production Board, and they are chronically over-subscribed and under-funded.

When we refer to the British film industry as 'beleaguered' we mean two things: one, that there is no viable commercial industry any more, and two, that there is no cinema of quality. I believe that the two are one hundred per cent connected. Is it just coincidence that an industry where 'culture' is a dirty word, where 'art-house' is synonymous with failure, where a large percentage of the people in it don't even go to the movies, has no commercial prospects either? Any country which wants a viable film industry needs a bedrock of small-budget film-making, a turnover of opportunity which allows new film-makers to express themselves. In France, Germany and Italy, whatever the limitations of their various systems, this is subsidised by a central authority. In America, the industry itself is big enough to absorb this kind of work. What price Scorsese, Lucas, Coppola, Malik, Spielberg? Why are there 32 films by new directors *every year* in France?

The argument is that an industry which is terrified by originality has no real hope commercially. But this is just one part of it. The second is that, surely, it is time that cinema is put in its proper place along with

all the other arts that are now subsidised by the state. The amounts required are tiny by comparison, the rewards potentially much greater. For the equivalent of the yearly subsidy to the Royal Opera House alone, you could create this area of low-budget production which would regenerate the British film industry. And there is an audience, a big audience of cinemagoers who want to see films which are different, but who are not reached in any way by the present systems of distribution and exhibition.

Given the bankrupt state of the film industry, at least television, with few of the same commercial pressures, should be an area in which new talent can emerge. But television drama has completely atrophied. Most of the producers I have met are desperate for something new, yet terrified of it when they see it. Filmed drama, because of the enormous production investment by television companies in electronic equipment, has become something of a luxury—a prestige item to be handed out to the tried and tested few. And those few are getting fewer, and more tested.

To be fair, certain crevices have opened

up which give a glimmer of hope. I know from personal experience that the National Film Development Fund is generating action, as is the BBC Development Fund, just because of the simple possibility of pre-production finance, of money to write a script. But even with these, you are far from generating a level of production and employment. What is needed is a fully operating British Film Authority *now*, with no procrastination and no delays, with a revolving production fund and investment in distribution and exhibition (Italnoleggio, the Italian state distribution company, will have 100 cinemas by next year), and manned by people with no vested interests in maintaining the status quo.

If the National Film School has any rationale at all, then it is to provide a new generation of film-makers. This is only a viable concept if there is an industry for them to work in, and the problem with the National Film School is that at the moment it exists in a vacuum. And it is a dismal prospect 'doing the rounds' in an industry where there is virtually no hope—no room for ideas so expensively bought. The yawning gap between creative life at the

Italian street scene from Mike Radford's 'Unità', made for BBC Omnibus



National Film School and the realities of the outside world is already taking its toll. It is very easy to be frightened by the prospects which await you, and instead of indulging in the follies out of which truly original ideas are born, to be panicked into imitating in a bastard form a kind of television drama which you know will be well-regarded in those areas in which employment might be found, and which might give you a chance of making a living. Interestingly enough, the liveliest debates, and the most original movies, tend to be in documentaries—the likeliest area of employment.

As for myself, I am grateful to those who employ me—and allow me the degree of creative freedom which is in their power within the formats in which I work. But every day I get one step further away from what I was training for. And I sense the fire in my belly slowly going out—because I need to live. So in the words of Raymond Chandler, I am becoming a conniver rather than a creator. The only realistic thing to do is to emigrate, thus once again proving that this country is a wonderful training ground for skills in use abroad. I want more than anything else to make films in this country, about this country. Maybe I shall fail, in which case I shall retire gracefully. But what's the point in training somebody to believe in something, and then telling him it isn't true?

If this article sounds over-pessimistic, then I add this rider. I know that, whatever happens, I will never regret having had that opportunity; and I also know that given the right circumstances in the outside industry the National Film School can and will fulfil its purpose, and prove to be money very well spent. And as a rejoinder to members of the Film Producers Association who feel that Eady money should not go to the National Film School, all I can say is that at least it ensures that a small part of that levy is going back into film production.

BOKOVA/TAMMES MORRISON/KING

The opinions and frustrations which Mike Radford expresses here about his experiences since leaving the Film School are shared by many of the School's graduates. Some have weathered the transition better than others, but they tend to be the ones who, having accepted that the British feature industry offers them no opportunities to make films, have gratefully turned to television or the commercials industry in order to continue working within the parameters of their chosen field. One or two graduates have turned to teaching and as many have emigrated, at least temporarily. A few have been able to produce films for the Arts Council or the BFI Production Board; most are trying to survive in the admittedly tough world of the freelance, independent film-maker.

Few of them regret the time they spent at the Film School, for they acknowledge that the School gave them three years to develop their talent and ideas without

having to worry about outside commercial pressures. Those students who had little or no prior contact with the British feature or television industries have since wished that the Film School had been more integrated with the industries outside. As JANA BOKOVA has written: 'While at the NFS, I enjoyed the freedom which was given to us at that time, and although it was sometimes quite hard to take, it was very useful. One thing that I slightly regret is that while I was there it was not possible to work in the industry on productions while still being a student: I think it would have helped both sides.'

STEVE MORRISON was one student who was able to put his previous experience into perspective and to develop new approaches to his work. 'Being at the Film School, after having spent a little bit of time at the BBC, allowed me to see the overall picture of television, something which is difficult to see when you're actually working inside television. Working at the BBC, you are either on one production ladder or another, and it's difficult to jump rungs. I had been on the radio production ladder before I went to the School, which meant that I never touched 'film' as such. On attachment to BBC TV, if I was thrown into an editing room with an editor, I was expected to give him instructions, when *he* was the one with the experience, not me. A lot of my friends thought that my going to the Film School was a backwards step. But I wanted to find a possible way at my age of learning how you actually make films. I never wanted to be a Pasolini or a Fellini. I expected that I'd go back into television, but with a stronger feeling of what I wanted to produce. There was no formal structure of training at the School during those first years, mainly individual training based on the needs of the students. I spent most of my time not just learning about technical things, but developing in practice theories about democratic, observational film-making, exploring the relationship between the film-maker and the people he's filming.'

For Steve Morrison it was important that 'the passion of the ideas developed at the School be put into practice as soon as possible, even if the chances of falling on your face are greater.' Another example of a student who took this chance is CHRIS KING. At the School, he had made a film called *The Healing*, from a script written by his wife. 'After graduating in July 1974, I spent a couple of months wandering about, showing *The Healing* to people in order to get work. I think I saw every Head of Drama of every TV company in the country. And I will say one thing about them—they're all very willing to listen to people who don't have a track record. We did get an offer for the script of the film, but that producer wanted to hire a big name director, someone like Jack Gold, to make the new version. Luckily for me, David Rose of the BBC became interested in the project, and he wanted *me* to direct it. So *The Healing* was remade for the BBC, and it was an almost frame-for-frame reproduction of the film I'd made at the School. You see, the one thing that I had figured out during my last months at the School was that there was no feature film industry for me to go to, so I would have to think in terms of television. Since the original version of my film

had been composed with TV in mind, there was very little difference between that and the final TV version. I looked forward to working in television. The English film directors I most admired had all come from television, so I thought it would be a good apprenticeship for me too. Even if I'd had the chance to direct a big feature right after leaving the School, I don't think I would have taken it, because I really didn't feel ready for it.'

There are many other graduates who found the transition to the world outside more difficult. 'While I was at the School,' writes JANA BOKOVA, 'I made a couple of rather unconventional films, which were in fact quite successful at different film festivals, only to find that, when hustling for a job, although my style was appreciated, it was considered "quite unlike what is normally produced on television"; which sounded like a compliment to me, but which did not help in building a realistic working relationship with television. Although the nature of my films is such that I don't at all mind the TV format, I was originally aiming at a format not really established in this country—that of the feature-length documentary which should have just as much chance on the cinema circuits as on TV. It seems to me that so-called documentary drama, which is a flourishing tradition in England and often reaches a very high standard, is tending to dominate in this area. It's somehow inconceivable here to explore the other extreme of the documentary form, which originates with *cinéma vérité*—the real story, directly recorded. No one here seems to be very much turned on by what seems to me to be such fertile territory: the magic of captured authenticity.'

For another documentary-orientated graduate, camerawoman DIANE TAMMES, the problem is even more endemic. 'At the School I was influenced in my first years by *cinéma vérité* documentaries, the idea of a film-maker who was conversant with all aspects of film—camera, sound, editing and dubbing—following the American and French tradition. We studied the work of Leacock, David Hancock, Pennebaker and the Maysles Brothers. Later I came to the realisation that within the industry in this country, in which I wanted to work, the idea of a two-man crew was not yet possible, the crewing system is far more organised and structured. It is an apprentice, craft-based industry, and the dearth of work makes the situation explosive. There is little work even for the established cameraman. The graduate views the idea of fifteen years as an assistant with trepidation; he/she may be thirty when graduating from the School. The situation is unresolved.

'On this basis, I began to look more towards the work that was being accomplished in spite of these strictures. Since I left the School eighteen months ago, I have worked for television on a freelance basis as a camerawoman, making the sort of films for television which I was encouraged to make while at the School, like *Some Women of Marrakesh*. Also, I have made a point of shooting grant-funded documentaries and two fiction films for the BFI Production Board, including Peter Wollen and Laura Mulvey's recent *Riddles of the Sphinx*. I'm now working with Roger

Graef on the *Decisions* series, which I consider to be a further apprenticeship on some of the most interesting work being done in British TV today.'

Inside Granada, STEVE MORRISON was able to see his Film School ideas bear fruit and influence his chosen medium of expression. 'Before I went to the NFS, I had been a BBC researcher. When I left the School, I arrived at Granada as a producer. This was an incredible jump, one which the School had helped me to make, but one which I wouldn't recommend everyone to try. You take to each institution you enter the image of the institution you've just left. When I went to Granada in 1974, I had the image of being an individualistic, theoretical film-maker. I had to convince them that I was a practical TV production person as well. The transition from the School to Granada was an easy one, because the people there have a background in documentary and share some of my ideas. I didn't have to compromise at all. The only thing I was and am still fighting is the beast of TV itself, its intrinsic nature. One thing I have learned since leaving the School is that there each project is regarded as an art object, that is, everyone is engaged in making his own product which everyone will come to watch and discuss, whereas the effect of television is mainly in repetition. While a one-off programme can create some ripples, like *Cathy Come Home*, the most significant aspect of television is the accumulated effect of a series of programmes. In other words, one remembers years of *World in Action* rather than any one particular *World in Action* programme.

'Since leaving the School, I've been developing ideas which I hope will affect a whole series of programmes. At *World in Action*, I tried to expand on their basic concepts of investigative journalism by developing my own style of "evidence on film". *World in Action* had of course used ciné-vérité techniques to observe events, particularly in the 60s, but it was much more difficult to persuade them to accept the same techniques for covering conversations between people. It had to be a pretty virile conversation to get transmitted in

real time. I had to combine my own thinking about character-developing documentary with *World in Action's* harder journalistic techniques. It's a very powerful combination when it works. I spent two years working on a possible marriage of these forms. I wanted to promote a more personal approach to TV journalism, a more psychological approach to film-making, one which the Film School had allowed me to explore. Once back in television, I realised that if I wanted my ideas to take root, I had to understand the form of TV and to tackle television at its most traditional. So, I moved from making personal films at the School for myself and my subjects to making a series of TV programmes for different audiences, each time moving towards more popular (i.e. prime) times and more popular forms. I may end up producing the news.

'At the School I remember I used to be begrudging of other people's "good" films if their form wasn't to my liking. I remember arguing with people like Fred Wiseman and Marcel Ophuls. Now, I'm more interested in the vitality of the people within the film than in the form of the work. At the School I became angry when the pure form was not what I thought it should be, whereas now I get angry when I see a film-maker sacrifice his subjects to his idea of form. Now that I'm working in daily programmes, I feel this point even more strongly. It's quite easy to make pure films for a few or trivial films for many people. The trick is making popular TV that's good.'

There are many graduates working in a freelance capacity who don't have the kind of access to audiences that Steve Morrison has and who are keen to have their work discussed and viewed in a wider context. DIANE TAMMES: 'Too often documentaries are shown on TV once only; there is no form of distribution outside TV. Thus films which could enrich our thinking and develop documentary film-making are given a brief, tantalising one-off glimpse, then disappear. Films need to be seen more than once. We who have become used to viewing films and viewing them critically in discussion with their makers need and

want this to happen in the outside world as well. Where is the open critical debate for films made for TV in this country? Without more venues like The Other Cinema, the Edinburgh Film Festival, and the NFT, independent film-makers cannot extend their approaches to the cinema.'

Mike Radford, Jana Bokova, Diane Tammes, Chris King and Steve Morrison have all found work, mainly in television, but for only one of them is this the area which they wanted to work in when they arrived at the Film School. We must come back to the crucial point that, in Mike Radford's words, 'the real tragedy is that I am not engaged in what I was trained for . . . what I thought for the first time people were really interested in—a native British film industry.' How can the graduates of the National Film School plug in to an industry that doesn't appear to exist? What is needed to resurrect the British film industry?

CHRIS KING: 'We have to accept that there is no way our film industry can support the home-grown film we'd all like to see it make. Television has taken over that area of entertainment, that market, even though it is using less and less film (because of its heavy investment in video) and is becoming more and more cautious. There is, however, a huge potential market for British films in the United States. And when you consider, as you must, the employment situation in our feature industry, there is more hope for it to improve if the profit motive is, if not paramount, at least important. If the state were to subsidise the film industry, then the overall commercial viability of films would be forgotten. For me, film-making is a collaborative effort, and my taste veers towards Hollywood. Films that I admire are the recent films coming out of the States, films like *The Last Detail*. They're priced realistically to appeal to a certain audience. The audience for the home-grown product in Britain is dwindling, but the audience for American films is still increasing. We've got to see what Hollywood has that we don't have. And it's one thing—energy. It's not how much or how little a film was made for.

'We shouldn't feel that working in the commercial industry is like soiling our hands. We must use the principles the Americans use. There is no use making exclusively British films for British audiences until we have attracted the audience back to the cinemas in the first place. Small-budget "elitist" British films can't get in audiences like *Car Wash* can. The packaging is very important. Now, I abhor the thinking behind films like *A Bridge Too Far*. That's not the kind of packaging I would like to see. But you need to be able to tell your backers with all honesty "we can make your money back"—and that goes whether the budget is £500,000 or three times that. There are enough talented film-makers here to go round; we need more imaginative producers, people like David Puttnam. If we can recreate the audience there was in England in the 50s, or is in America now, then we are on the right track, and then we can afford the minority audience films. What we need is more Michael Ritchies and fewer Bernardo Bertoluccis.'

'Some Women of Marrakesh', shot by camerawoman Diane Tammes for Granada's 'Disappearing World'



Vincent Porter

TELEVISION and FILM PRODUCTION IN EUROPE

For the last twenty years, television organisations throughout the European Community have used the low purchase prices paid for feature films and for foreign television series as the cornerstone of their production strategies.* In some countries, the national policy has tried to establish a balance between the television economy and the film/cinema economy, either by limiting the number of feature films which may be shown on television or by requiring the television organisations to pay substantial sums into the national film aid fund. In France, the first and second networks, TF1 and A2, are each limited to screening 150 feature films a year (the third channel, FR3, may screen 240). In Italy, initially the state broadcasting network RAI, and now all the commercially owned local broadcasting and cable stations, are limited to two feature films per week and are not allowed to screen them during weekends or on public holidays. In addition to the limitation on screenings of features, the French television networks in 1976 paid a total of 15 million francs (£1.8m) into the film aid fund.

In recent years, however, the relationship between film producers and the broadcasting organisations has begun to change. Television's voracious appetite for product and the speed with which it has been buying up material has meant that, slowly but inexorably, the prices paid for feature films have begun to rise. Throughout Europe, the emphasis is now on television/film co-production, as the broadcasting organisations seek to ensure their future flow of film product without putting up all the production finance. These developments raise two sets of problems which Europe's policy makers are only beginning to think through, and which will no doubt be troubling mem-

bers of Sir Harold Wilson's Interim Action Committee as they ponder the future relationship between the film and television industries. The first set of problems concerns the economic relations which pertain between public service broadcasting organisations and the international film industry. The second set concerns the role that television should play in endeavouring to determine a national policy for film culture. As always, it is difficult to consider the two areas separately.

*See, for instance, my article 'TV Strategies and European Film Production', SIGHT AND SOUND, Summer 1974.

The Jackpot Strategy

Despite its much publicised troubles, the film industry is still one sector of the economy where there are large profits to be made provided the conditions are right. Lord Grade put it succinctly: 'In television there's a ceiling on the money you can earn. In the film business there's no such limitation.' Accordingly, Associated Television is now diversifying into the film industry. In 1975, Associated Television set up a joint distribution venture with the General Cinema Corporation of Boston, which owns over 700 cinemas in the U.S., to form Associated General Films. ATV has invested progressively more and more funds into film rather than television production, and at the Cannes Festival last May Lord Grade announced a huge \$125 million investment programme of 18 feature films, including a three picture deal with Charles Bronson. Films previously financed by ATV, through its subsidiary ITC, have included *Farewell, My Lovely*, *The Return of the Pink Panther*, *The Cassandra Crossing*, *The Eagle Has Landed* and *Voyage of the Damned*. ATV's film production activities are already showing a higher rate of profit than its television activities. According to Ian Jessel, ITC's director of sales, marketing and distribution, ITC has had no losses, nor even settled for marginal successes, on any of their films.

How is it, given the parlous state of the feature film industry in Britain, that ATV's successes can be so spectacular? It is because of the powerful entry that ATV was able to make into the world market. By establishing a guaranteed outlet in the United States, which accounts for between 50 and 55 per cent of the world market, and by investing in production on a scale substantial enough to guarantee distributors a continuity of product, ITC has been able to command the distribution services of the top three distributors in each of the remaining parts of the world market.

On its way towards the jackpot, there have been two significant shifts in ATV's corporate strategy. First, the television franchise holder, ATV Network, has become less significant to the activities of the parent company, ATV Corporation, and in 1976 only accounted for 36 per cent of group profits. Second, most of ATV's feature films have been made in the United States rather than in Britain. Encouraged by ATV's success, other British companies are pursuing the same path. EMI, which owns half of Thames Television, is set to produce a programme of films for the world market and three of these, *Convoy*, *The Deerhunter* and *Driver*, are being produced in Hollywood. Trident Films Limited, a subsidiary of the Trident Television Group which includes both the Yorkshire and Tyne Tees Television Companies, has also announced its first feature film, *The Four Feathers*.

A further advantage of the jackpot strategy is that it ensures for the television franchise holder (ATV Network or Thames Television, for example) a stockpile of films for future transmission. Furthermore, the television transmission rights for these films will be paid before the deduction of excess profits levy, thus permitting money to pass

from the network franchise holder to a company within the group whose profits are not subject to the levy. Clearly this will raise problems for the auditors of the IBA and of the Treasury when assessing the internal pricing policy of the companies, as the private sector film production company sells its transmission rights to the television franchise holder.

The Spin-Off Strategy

In recent years, there has been a flurry of British feature films based on popular television series. *On the Buses*, *Please Sir*, *Father, Dear Father* were based on comedy film series; more recently, *Sweeney!* has emerged from Thames' action-packed police series. Films of this type are aimed mainly at those markets where sales of the television series have created audience expectations and awareness on which cinema sales can be built. The successes of the comedy series have mainly been centred on Commonwealth markets (Canada, Australia, New Zealand), with additional revenue coming from sales to West Germany, Holland and Scandinavia. The spin-off feature films, while obviously aimed mainly at British cinema audiences, can also look for further sales in those countries where the series have been networked locally. *Sweeney!* presents a slightly different case, in that while its actors and characters will be relatively unknown to audiences who have not seen the series, the film itself represents a distinct shift towards the internationally marketed, action-packed screen adventure.

The main benefits to the television organisation will probably arise from the sale of the character rights to the film company, together with the assurance of a television programme for future transmission. But the strategy is dependent on television sales creating a market demand among cinema audiences, and although it may offer immediate short term profits it cannot be developed in the long term unless there is a commensurate strategy for developing the flow of television series. It does nothing in the long term to help the television organisation build up a strong position in the film markets of the world.

The special relationship between Thames Television and its parent company, EMI, presents a rather different case. When *Sweeney!*, or any other Thames spin-off, is distributed in cinemas, it will clearly carry the full weight of EMI's corporate marketing strength behind it, since EMI (who have a 50 per cent shareholding in Thames, which owns Euston Films, the film's production company) will also stand to benefit from any profits accruing to the production company, as well as those accruing to EMI's own distribution and exhibition activities. In such a situation, Thames can find a different set of tensions pulling at its own company planning decisions when it is devising a new television series. Should such a series be designed for British audiences, or should it be designed to meet the needs of television markets and of international film distribution? Ultimately, of course, the decision will be a commercial one, which will balance the potential profits from cinemas and from television sales one against the other.

Public Service Broadcasting and Co-Production

For most public service broadcasting organisations, if not for all, their charters forbid diversification out of broadcasting. For them, film/television investment is only justified as an extension of their programme production investment. That is, they must be contractually guaranteed the television transmission rights when they put up their investment. This leads most public service broadcasters to set up film/television co-productions of various types and complexities.

In any co-production agreement, there are essentially three main areas for negotiation. These are the division of production finance between the co-producers; the division of revenue (or in some cases division of the copyright between various territories and media); and the question of editorial and creative control. As a general rule the party which puts up the major share of the production finance retains creative control. However, a party which takes a greater share of investment risk, either by putting up risk capital at a pre-production stage or by deferring his share of the revenue until after the other party has recouped his investment, may well achieve creative control even though he has not put up a majority of the investment. It is also normal practice for the division of revenue to reflect the division of the investment, or for territorial rights to be divided in approximately the same proportion. However, when public service broadcasting networks enter into co-production arrangements with private film production companies, other factors apply.

The Patronage Strategy

The practice of co-production has developed most strongly in West Germany, where the policy of the two broadcasting networks, ARD and ZDF, has been to attempt by a variety of methods to nurture and support film production. Unlike British broadcasting, German television does not produce all its indigenous programmes. Some are contracted out to independent companies, most if not all the production finance being put up by the broadcasting organisations in return for the television transmission rights. The private production company may retain some other rights—such as those for overseas theatrical distribution—even if these are not worth very much in real financial terms.

During the campaign which led to the enactment of the second German film aid law in 1974, the young German filmmakers sought not only to increase the contribution paid by the cinemas to the aid fund, but also to extract a contribution from the television organisations in the form of a tax of 20,000 DM (then £3,300) for each feature film transmitted. This last proposal was rejected by the Bundesrat after substantial lobbying by the broadcasting organisations, but it led to a change in broadcasting policy which resulted in an agreement, signed in November 1974, between the two broadcasting organisations

and the Film Development Agency (Filmförderungsanstalt), representing the film industry.

This agreement provided for the broadcasting organisations to enter into three types of co-production arrangement with the film industry. The first was an arrangement whereby the television networks would pay a total of 34 million DM towards film/television co-productions over the five years 1974-78. The German film co-producer is required to put up at least 25 per cent of the production finance, or of the German proportion of the production costs in the case of an international co-production. Any film so made is screened in the cinemas for two years before being shown on German television. The production funds themselves are allocated by a joint commission of four film industry and four television representatives, and the projects are placed before them jointly by a television station and by the film producer, together with the proposed script, cast, schedule and budget.

It can be seen that this procedure permits the television station to pre-select the scripts which it is prepared to present to the joint commission, and it has been heavily criticised by film industry representatives as having supported only films suitable for television viewing which have often done badly at the cinema box-office. However, Volker Schlöndorff's *The Lost Honour of Katherina Blum* grossed some 5 million DM (£1.25m) in German cinemas, which compares reasonably well with grosses of double that size for American films such as *The Towering Inferno* or *The Sting*. Many other films, however, will be lucky if they gross £300,000.

A second part of the 1974 agreement provided for the networks to contribute 1 million DM (£250,000) to the Project Promotion Fund set up under the 1974 Film Aid law. A sum of 5 million DM was withdrawn from the Aid Fund to finance film projects as well as distribution and exhibition projects, and the money from the television networks was especially earmarked for film projects. The networks had no control over the choice of projects supported by this fund. This meant that some of the films supported by the Project Promotion Fund—such as Sam Peckinpah's *Cross of Iron* and Helma Sanders' *Heinrich*—did not have to be approved and did not receive grants from the mixed film and television commission. Others, such as *The Lost Honour of Katherina Blum*, obtained grants from both funds. Finally, television co-finances some films directly by purchasing the television rights. One third of the production finance is paid in advance and the remainder on delivery of the film. Films such as Wim Wenders' *Kings of the Road* and Herzog's *Heart of Glass* were financed by this method.

While many sections of the film industry criticise the agreement as restrictive and serving only television interests, the television organisations see it in a different light. While it is true that they are financing future programme material, they are also in the process supporting an independent German film industry; and this, in their view, should help Germany to make films which not only meet television's programming needs but can also make substantial profits from cinema exhibition. Part of the

West Germany: Television Contributions to the Film Industry, 1976

	DM	£
Payments to FFA Project Promotion Fund	1,000,000	250,000
Payments to FFA/ARD/ZDF Co-production Fund	7,000,000	1,750,000
Payments for TV Rights of German feature films	25,290,700	6,322,675
Payments to Independent Film Companies:		
(a) Television Productions	218,010,900	54,502,725
(b) Dubbing	8,604,800	2,151,200
(c) Other	19,465,700	4,866,425
Payments to Affiliated Companies:		
(a) Television Productions	57,891,100	14,472,775
(b) Dubbing	4,037,700	1,009,425
(c) Other	1,288,300	322,075
Total Payments:	342,589,200	85,647,300

Sources: Media Perspektiven 11/74 and 6/77

problem with this philosophy is that it does not pay enough attention either to the way in which the total production investment is spread between pictures, or to the structure of the German exhibition and distribution sectors. Most of the production grants are of about £100,000 and none has exceeded £250,000. This usually means that production budgets rarely exceed £500,000, whereas the films are competing with American movies whose budgets run into millions. Second, German film exhibition and distribution are dispirited and disorganised. There is no coherent, long-term marketing strategy for these films which involves distributors and cinema exhibitors. For many of them, life is so hard that they are more interested in earning money from the latest American blockbuster than in developing a new German cinema.

The German strategy has been one of patronage, keeping young film artists alive with modest handouts of production finance. The film industry has done nothing, and satisfies its patriotic impulses by attacking television.

The Seeding Strategy

The patronage strategy, as practised by public broadcasting in West Germany, is an expensive method which does little, if anything, to restructure the film industry according to national need. In 1976, the German television networks supported the German film industry to the tune of some £86m (see table). It is clear that such a policy requires an extremely wealthy television system. Even though German television is comparatively well off even when compared with, say, British television, its patronage strategy is nevertheless forcing economies in other areas of production such as variety shows. Here German television has been requiring record companies to put up substantial sums towards production budgets—the companies, in turn, benefiting from the publicity which the shows give their songs and singers.

For a public broadcasting organisation such as the BBC, which is severely over-stretched financially, patronage on the scale practised in Germany is not possible. The BBC therefore has chosen to put its

funds behind British talent rather than behind British production. Its seed money strategy, announced in the Report of the Prime Minister's Working Party on the Future of the Film Industry, commits a total of £250,000 as seed money or pre-production finance, on the basis of £25,000 per project. By putting up pre-production finance, the BBC will be able to retain editorial control of the projects selected for a relatively low initial cost. But the strategy is extremely risky, in that there is no guarantee that production finance will become available for all the projects seeded by the BBC. Current thinking seems to be that the BBC will be doing well if it can raise production finance for half the projects.

The BBC will be entitled to share the profits of the finished film, like any other investor. However, given the fact that most film industry profits come from distribution and exhibition rather than production, the investment advantages of the seed money strategy may be more apparent than real. But the BBC will pick up the television rights of those films that do attract production finance for £25,000, and will also be keeping alive the creative skills of British producers, writers and directors, even if they may not always see their endeavours turned into completed films.

Co-Productions and Labour

Like the patronage strategy, the seeding strategy will not touch the structure of the indigenous film industry. What is not clear is how BBC editorial policy will react to approaches from sources of production finance which look to the films to be produced abroad—either within the European Community or, say, in Hollywood. Film strategies, like those of any other industrial sector, must concern themselves not only with commercial and cultural advantages but also with their impact on labour. The patronage strategy has had a disastrous effect on the stability of the German film labour market, providing proportionately less stable employment inside German television than exists in British television. For film and television trade unions, film/television co-productions threaten a switch of financial

resources from television, characterised by stable employment, to a film sector characterised by a predominantly freelance and inherently unstable situation. The BBC's seeding proposal specifically states that no permanent BBC staff will be employed on any film projects so funded.

In France, the proportion of programmes originated by the television networks dropped dramatically after the reorganisation of 1974, when transmission was separated from programme production except for news and simple documentary programmes. As a result, new regulations had to be introduced in July 1976 requiring the French networks to increase the number of original programmes which they financed. Unlike Britain, which has a transmission quota (self-imposed by the BBC and provided for in legislation for ITV), whereby 86 per cent of programmes, whether produced or purchased, should be of British origin and performance, the French authorities imposed a production quota. The two main channels, TF1 and A2, were required to increase the number of original productions of television dramas and series to a total of 300 hours per year from their then output of 197 hours. For the third channel, FR3, the figure was fixed at 60 hours. In addition, TF1 and A2 were required to produce 150 hours of original documentaries annually (FR3, 60 hours). In order to ensure that young creative personnel could flow into the industry, 10 per cent of all programmes, both fiction and documentary, were to be made by new directors who had not previously made more than two cinema or television productions.

In this context, film/television co-productions present new problems of definition. Some six months after the quota was announced, the first channel, TF1, announced its participation with Gaumont film productions in a feature film which would be transmitted the day before it opened in the cinema. Half of the £350,000 budget was to be put up by TF1, and the film would count as an original television production for production quota purposes. It was not clear what proportion of the budget would be spent on labour costs, or how the general principle of recognising film/TV co-productions is accepted by the French film unions.

The long term stabilisation of employment in the French film and television sectors has been particularly problematic since 1974, when ORTF was split up. Stable employment prospects are linked to the future of the Société Française de Production, which was formed out of the old production facilities of ORTF to produce films for both cinemas and television. SFP, however, has no long term guarantees that the French networks will continue to commission films from it, although when ORTF was broken up the networks were required in their first years to commission substantial but decreasing proportions of their productions from SFP. Joe Le Tac, chairman of the National Assembly's sub-committee for the radio and television budget, has argued that the networks should take up half the capital of SFP, to formalise a long term structural connection

Jonathan Rosenbaum

The
solitary
pleasures
of

STAR WARS

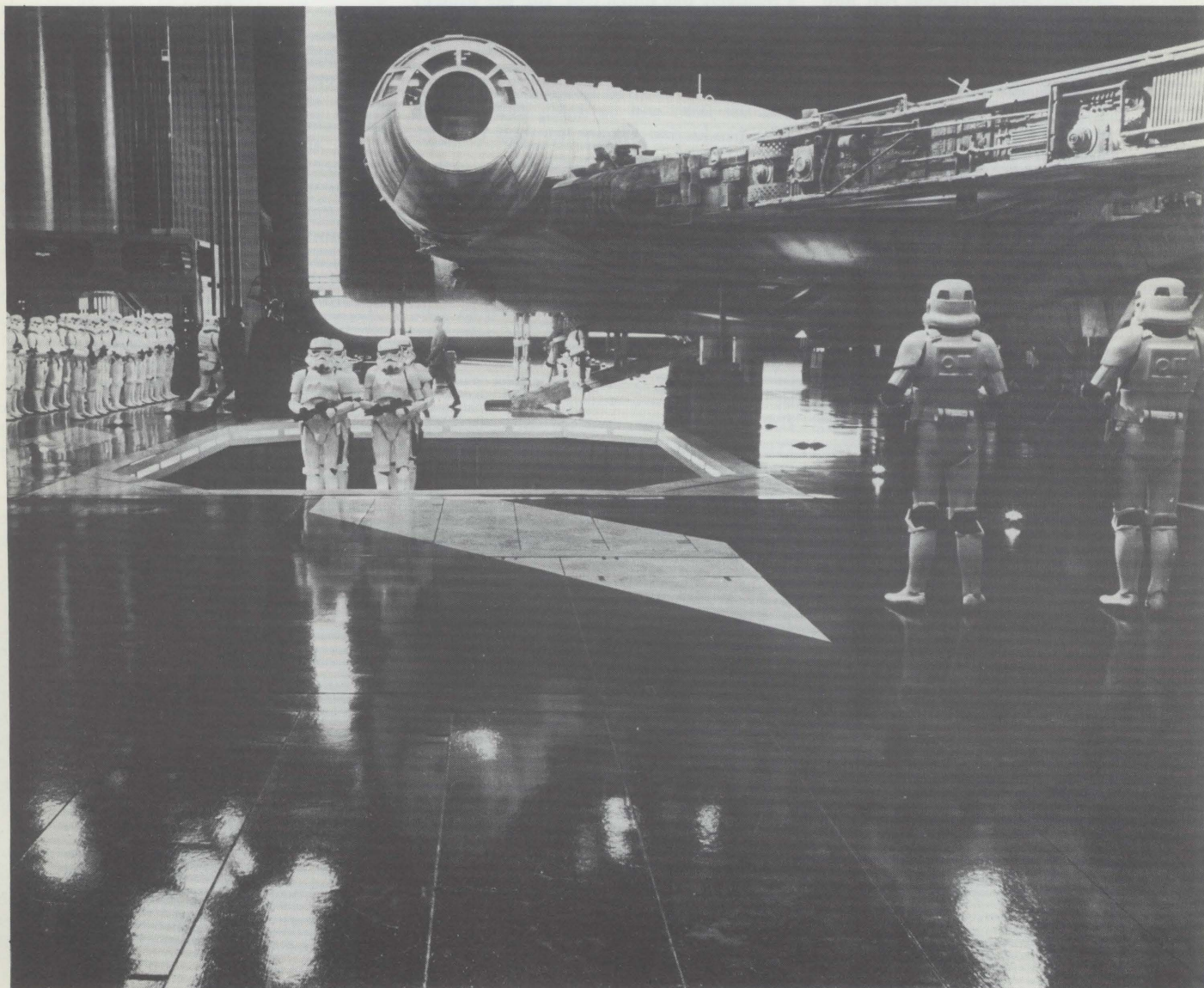
'Star Wars': in the hold of the Death Star

'A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away . . . ' reads the opening title, over vast interstellar reaches of wide-screen space. 'I've seen the future and it works!' declares a happy teenager on his way out of the movie to a TV reporter in Los Angeles—oddly parroting what Lincoln Steffens said about Russia over fifty years ago, before Ford Motors gave the slogan a second lease of life. 'Another galaxy, another time,' begins the novel's prologue more non-committally, carefully hedging all bets. But confusion between past and future, however useful to the tactics of George Lucas' *Star Wars*, seems almost secondary to the overriding insistence that whenever this giddy space opera is taking place, it can't possibly be anywhere quite so disagreeable as the present.

'Rather than do some angry, socially relevant film,' Lucas has said, 'I realised there

was another relevance that is even more important—dreams and fantasies, getting children to believe there is more to life than garbage and killing and all that real stuff like stealing hubcaps—that you could still sit and dream about exotic lands and strange creatures.' Although garbage and killing are anything but absent from *Star Wars*, and stealing hubcaps is around in spirit if not in letter, Lucas' aspiration is easy enough to comprehend, even after the social interests of his *THX 1138* and *American Graffiti*. The disconcerting thing for a good many critics about his latest box-office monolith is that it doesn't seem to *mean* anything other than what it unabashedly is: a well-crafted, dehumanised update of *Flash Gordon* with better production values, no ironic overtones and a battery of special effects.

Consider the plot, which any well-behaved computer fed with the right amount of pulp could probably regurgitate: Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill), farm youth living with uncle and aunt on the remote planet Tatooine, son of a vanquished Jedi warrior of the Old Republic—an order overturned by the evil Galactic Empire, headed by former Jedi warrior Darth Vader and the malignant Grand Moff Tarkin (Peter Cushing)—accidentally intercepts part of a sound-and-image message sent by beautiful Princess Leia Organa (Carrie Fisher), a rebel senator from planet Alderaan held captive by the Empire, to Ben 'Obi-Wan'



Kenobi (Alec Guinness), legendary Jedi warrior now living as an outlaw in the Tatooine mountains . . .

Following the squat robot who carries the message—R2-D2, who is usually accompanied by C-3PO, a tall vocal sidekick that mumbles like an English butler—Luke meets Kenobi, who bequeaths him his father's light sabre and, after uncle and aunt are promptly killed in an Empire raid, enlists his aid in Leia's rescue. Meanwhile, he trains the youth in the mystical powers of the Force, a spiritual order which bestows extra-sensory talents. Hiring the hardened mercenary Han Solo (Harrison Ford) and his non-human servant Chewbacca in the grubby Mos Eisley Spaceport to pilot them, Luke and Kenobi set off on a string of adventures, during which the latter is killed in a duel with Vader and Leia is freed. Luke then accompanies the rebel freedom fighters in an offensive against Death Star, the Empire's seemingly impregnable battle station, and single-handedly succeeds in blowing it to attractively bubbly, sparkling and satisfying smithereens.

All this is very clean and bloodless. Vader crunches a few audible bones; aunt and uncle are burned to black cinders in homage to *The Searchers*; Kenobi executes a smooth forearm amputation with his sabre in the Mos Eisley saloon, and meets his own sabre death by vanishing into thin air, to be absorbed within the Force; the rest is mainly fireworks and pinball machines. The smirking idealism of Luke, the sullen cynicism of Han, the shrewish irritability of Leia, the growls and whines of Chewbacca, the fussy chattering of C-3PO and the electronic chirping of R2-D2 are all set up as 'cute' objects of delighted audience ridicule. Hamill, Ford and Fisher are made to look like surfers at an s-f masquerade ball; Cushing, the only visibly human villain, comes off as a rather improbable blend of Ming the Merciless and Jean-Luc Godard, in physiognomy as well as emotional tone. And apart from the steadfast Alec Guinness, who is respectfully allowed to assume a vaguer and more benign flatness as archetypal father figure, nearly everyone else is a monster, whether lovable (domestic) or disgusting (threatening), with the borderline between human and non-human often indistinguishable. (The gibbering, scavenging Jawas on Tatooine are a striking case in point: brown-robed and black-gloved, their only visible features are firefly eyes.)

The deliberate silliness of all this—like the intricate silliness that has always been part of Disney's stock-in-trade—leaves the audience free to react from a safe voyeuristic distance, enjoying 'pure' sensations that are unencumbered by any moral or emotional investments. Indeed, the cursory treatment of 'romantic interest' (with Leia still prevaricating at the end between both male leads via bored winks) leaves the way open for a very different sort of titillation. In the exhilarating space battles, with their odourless ecstasies of annihilation, and the various space-gun skirmishes, with their fancy dismemberings and eliminations, this essentially becomes an occasion for sexual release devoid of any partner. Like the remote-control TV channel selectors that children love to play with, and the mechanical shooting games found in arcades, *Star Wars* offers

solitary, narcissistic pleasures more than communal or romantic myths to keep its audience cheering.

Admittedly, Westerns, samurai sagas, Arthurian legends, Disney bestiaries, DeMille spectaculars and World War II epics have been borrowed from as liberally as earlier s-f. The climactic Death Star attack is modelled directly after a compilation of air battle clips from over fifty war films, and even the final procession of Luke, Han and Chewbacca down a long aisle to receive their medals has been identified by Arthur Lubow as a conscious 'restaging of the march of Hitler, Himmler and Lutze to the Nuremberg monument' in *Triumph of the Will*. But the point of this approach is to make all the myths it plunders equally trivial and 'usable' as nostalgic plot fodder, even if most of the emotions are absent. One would probably have to go back to the 1940s, as Lucas did, to find such a guiltless celebration of unlimited warfare, but one needs to escape history entirely in order to set up oppositions of good and bad—reflected in black and white patternings of costume and decor—as unambiguous. On the level of racial ideology, this knowing mindlessness is even shrewder. While the original 1936 *Flash Gordon* serial could allude to the 'Yellow Peril' directly through Ming the Merciless without any sort of embarrassment, the styling of the Jawas as stingy Jewish merchants—'Munchkin Shylocks', in Richard Corliss' apt phrase—is much more oblique and subtle; one might even have to see the relationship of 'Jawa' to the Hebrew 'Yawah' in order to catch the clue.

Following the fashion set by 2001 in some aspects of its design—robots programmed to be more 'personable' than any of the actors, in-depth trajectories of slab-like missiles entering the lower foreground of shots and sliding away diagonally (including the three long paragraphs preceding the action)—*Star Wars* postulates itself as the anti-2001 in nearly every other respect, and not only because fantasy is systematically substituted for technology. If Kubrick's central subject was intelligence, Lucas' is predicated on blind instinct: Luke's initiation into the Force, like the spectator's into the film, is basically a matter of surrendering to conditioned reflexes and letting the cosmic *mise en scène* take over. And where 2001's sense of spectacle was contemplative, *Star Wars*' is near-Pavlovian in its careful measurements of give and take, making it impossible on a practical level to isolate many of the special effects from the editing.

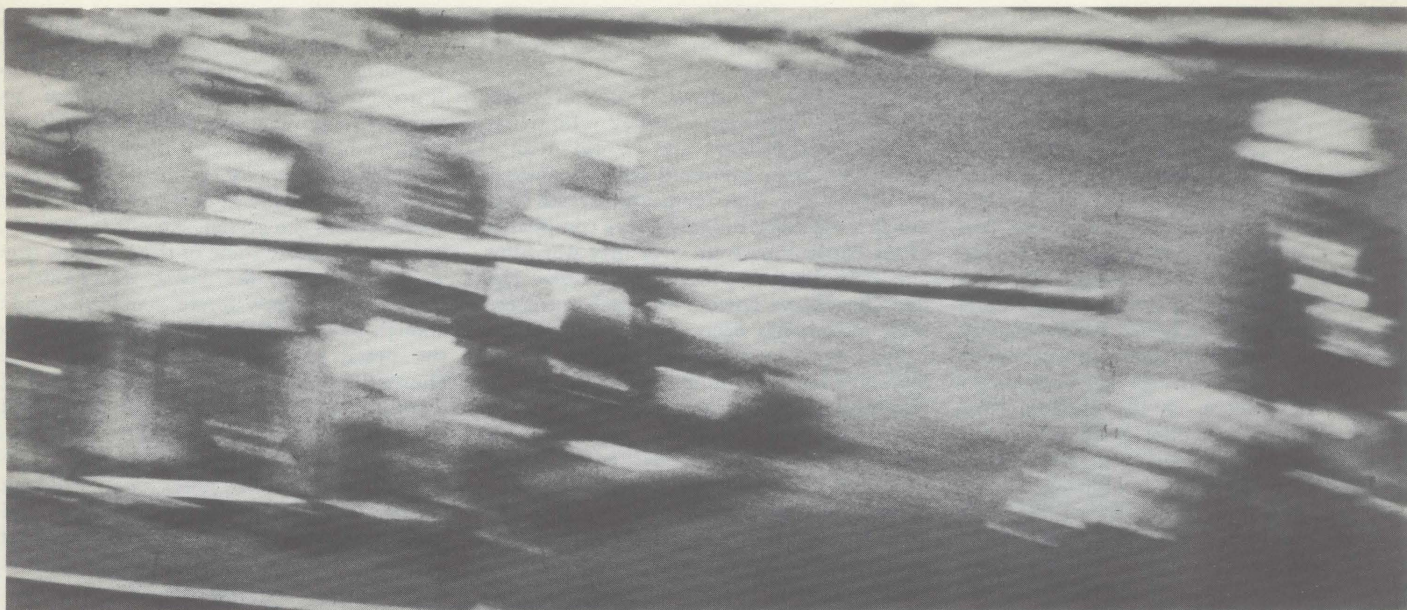
Working on the assumption that the enchantment of any creature, landscape, gadget or set decreases in ratio to the length of time it's on the screen—a withholding premise already evident in the Krel episodes of *Forbidden Planet* and the brief, last-minute glimpses of a perishing city in *This Island Earth*—the movie is constructed like a teasing comic strip storyboard. Nothing incidental or scenic is allowed to retard the rapidly paced narrative, but is merely packed along en route (like the twin moons of Tatooine, or the binoculars Luke uses while scouting for R2-D2). A rare exception is made for diverse beasties in the inventive Mos Eisley Western saloon sequence, where spectacle momentarily triumphs over event.

Less imaginative in its other-worldly

architecture than *The 5000 Fingers of Dr. T*—an all but forgotten Stanley Kramer production of the 1950s which, unlike *Star Wars*, incorporated an escape from an unbearable present in its plot—Lucas' smorgasbord of styles is often more a matter of quantity than quality, as in the dense profusion of red laser beams which periodically streak across the screen. An effort is made, however, to make some of the locations (the scrapheap inside the Jawas' Sandcrawler, Mos Eisley, Han's pirate starship) untidy enough to seem lived in. Sound, including the nearly continuous music, serves the elliptical pacing throughout: intimations of Tarkin's imminent torture of Leia are limited to a brief shot of a syringe and the loud sliding shut of a door; the beast that pulls Luke down into the slimy muck of a shrinking garbage bin is more heard than seen; and the whistling sounds of the attacking rebel starships work a lot better as drama than as science.

For a film so devoid of any dialectic, one is tempted to speculate what its absolute antithesis might be. Would the recent films of Grand Moff Godard—low-budget, experimental, pleasurable to the mind rather than to the reflexes—be far off the mark? Yet if any parallel can be found between the film world and Lucas' Manichean universe, it is the blitzkrieg of media fanfare celebrating *Star Wars* and its countless spin-off industries—not the trifling efforts to get Godard's films seen or acknowledged anywhere—that corresponds to the Empire's efforts to snuff out every form of resistance. And the consortium that is currently contriving to inundate everyone's mind with a few profitable monoliths and assign the rebel forces of cinema to cheerful oblivion is not merely a group of big business men, but a movement composed of critics, editors and media programmers and broadcasters—all of whom collaborate with other consumers in making *Star Wars* (which is already threatening to topple *Jaws* as the all-time money-maker) more than a simple movie, but an appreciable dent in the landscape.

What has any of this to do with esoteric items like *Numéro Deux* and *Ici et Ailleurs*, whose more fragile transactions might as well be occurring on another planet? Simply the fact that both are concerned with advancing knowledge in the here and now, and this is generally taken to be such a distasteful activity that even defenders of such films generally feel compelled to describe their experiences as ones of necessary 'unpleasure'. The mere title of an earlier Godard film, *Le Gai Savoir*, already sounds anachronistic within the present climate. Who but a sick person, runs the implied argument, could take pleasure in a documentary shot of Palestinian soldiers in *Ici et Ailleurs*, followed by a title saying that 'Nearly all these actors are dead'? Better to take a calculated step backward in knowledge, sever communal and historical ties, hoot at heroes and villains alike, blow up invisible, imaginary enemies from a safe video distance and enjoy it all as good, clean, healthy fun—marking time until the next real opportunities for automatic, xenophobic destruction arrive. This is the 'relevance' of *Star Wars* that a Lucas finds 'more important'; and several million filmgoers are heartily agreeing.



BERLIN versus TOKYO

Dai Vaughan

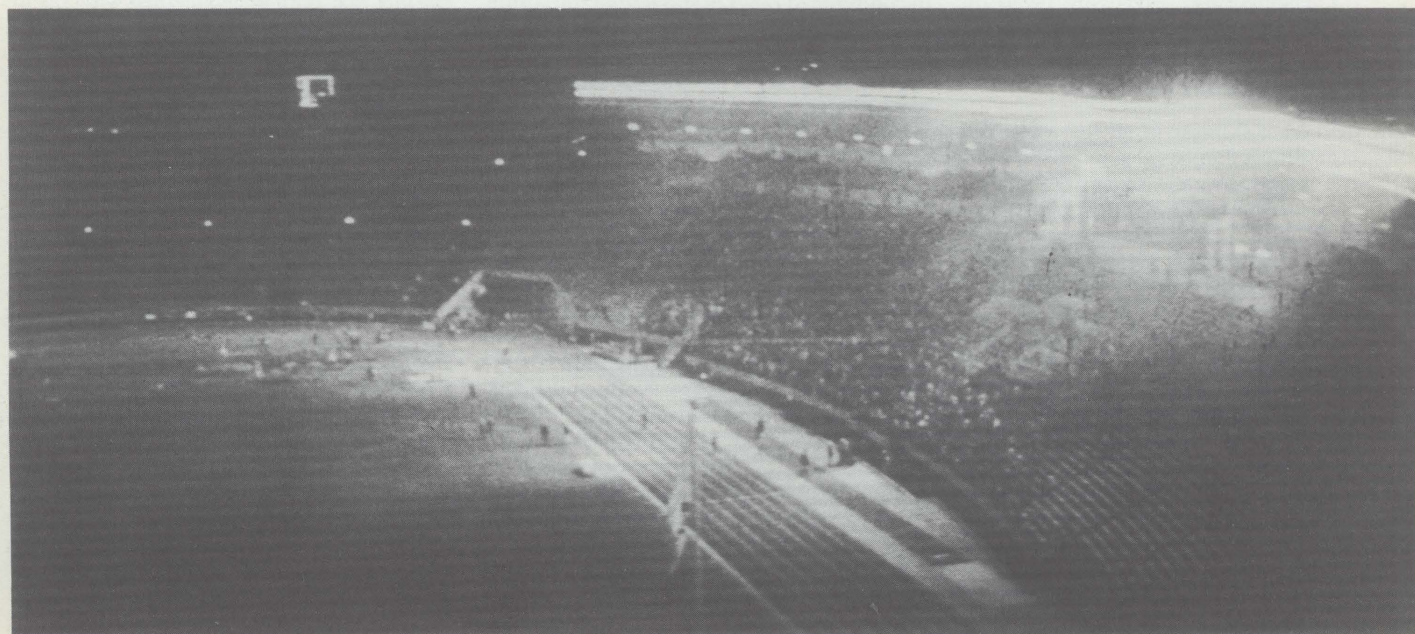
Documentary appears to express attitudes towards the world by appearing to allow the world to speak for itself. A purpose of this article will be to shed some light, albeit indirect and perhaps diffuse, on this paradox.

I have chosen to compare the use of slow motion in two films of the Olympic Games: those of Leni Riefenstahl (*Berlin*, 1936) and Kon Ichikawa (*Tokyo*, 1964), which for convenience I shall refer to simply as *Berlin* and *Tokyo*. Films about sporting events clearly lie at the 'actuality' end of the documentary spectrum, where there is least risk of our confusing their aesthetics with those of narrative fiction or theatre. Slow motion, on the other hand, is a device which might be held to entail manipulation verging upon 'distortion'. Since both films are long and inevitably episodic, I shall centre discussion on the treatment of those events which, it may be agreed, afford the most successful sequences in *Berlin* and *Tokyo* respectively: the pole-vault and the marathon.

I

The pole-vault in *Berlin* begins impressionistically. Music accompanies a series of shots from various angles—low shots, shadow shots, shots from above in which the vaulter rises to top the bar at camera level—leading gently into slow motion. Contestants are not identified; and the emphasis is upon the grace of the movement, the surprising height which a vaulter can achieve, and our cumulative compulsion to watch such an act endlessly repeated. The athletes are silhouetted as the light fades. The sun dispenses its parting rays from behind a

Tokyo: the vaulter's pole during the run-up; night view of the stadium

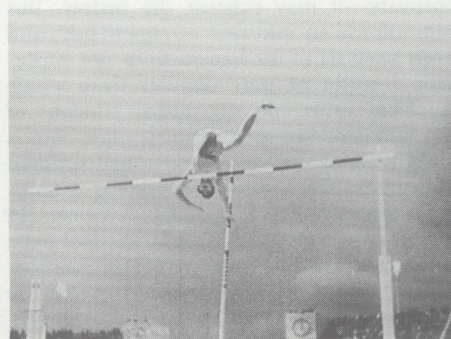
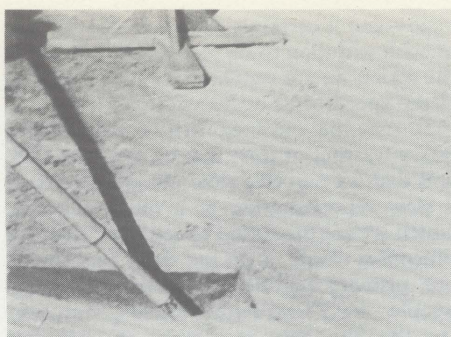


biblical cloud. The Olympic fire smokes ominously; and the sun—or perhaps it is the moon—glides into blackness. The music ends; and we are told that the last five men, fighting it out for the first three places, have been vaulting non-stop for five hours. Now we are close to the competitors. The camera squints along the pole as they poise themselves for the run. Their adversaries, huddled in blankets against the chill air, watch with unease and admiration.

In this, the climactic segment of the sequence, the run-up and the vault are taken in slow motion; but the reaction shots occur at normal speed. Since sport is a social ritual, itself arguably the vehicle of meanings prior to those claimed by the medium in which it is represented, the relationship established between spectators and events is of some significance. And here we encounter a striking difference between the two films: for whereas the treatment of the spectators in *Tokyo* is individual to the point of quirkiness (witness the release of the doves at the opening ceremony, where someone is shown protecting her head with a transistor radio), a remarkable proportion of the reaction shots in *Berlin* are of claquees responding to their cheer-leaders. Even enthusiasm, it seems, must be subject to properly constituted authority.

The pole-vault offers an extreme example. The spectators are integrated into the texture of the sequence with impeccable editing, their breath bated for the exertion of lift-off and their sigh of disappointment completing the cadence of a failed attempt; and the cheer-leaders, glancing over their shoulders at the athletes as a conductor will glance at the pianist in a concerto, contribute so fully to the play of dramatic tensions that they sometimes appear to be orchestrating not only the responses of the supporters but the progress of the action itself. Moreover, this integration is bonded by an extraordinary congruence between the overall dramatic curve of the sequence and the actual movement of the vaulter through space. Some preparatory shots represent his pause before action. The musical segment corresponds to his run-up. The transition to night is the spring of the pole as it strikes into the box. And the vaulter's ascent is the rising curve of tension to the climax of the contest. The release and fall are then represented by the shots following the announcement of the winner. (There is a high-angle wide shot encompassing the Olympic flame, massed arms aslant in the Nazi salute like the quills of a ruffled porcupine; then we see the winner, Meadows, also saluting, though not in the Hitler fashion; and finally there is a slow dissolve to the American flag.) This overall rhythmic correspondence gives the sequence a look of having been built to last.

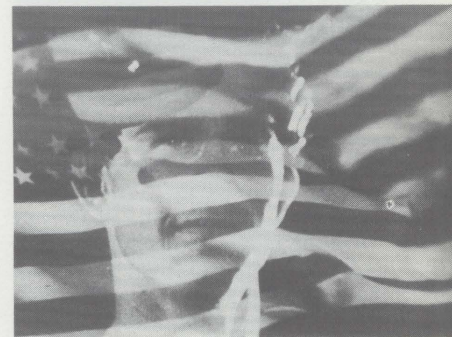
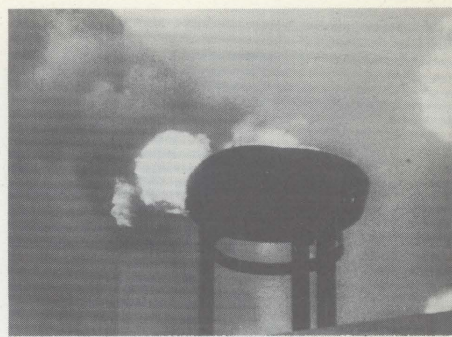
By contrast, the treatment of the pole-vault in *Tokyo* is either cursory or deft, according to our predisposition. The early shots are abstract in treatment; and night falls quickly in a series of three cuts from similar set-ups. Thus far, the sequence parallels that of *Berlin*, even to the use of the flame to introduce darkness. But, once impressionistic graces are relinquished, *Tokyo* takes a very different course. The event is shot from a distance, in a flat-on manner which denies it the quality of the spectacular; and the ungainly landing of the



Day and night shots from the *Berlin* pole-vault: the sequence has 'a look of having been built to last'

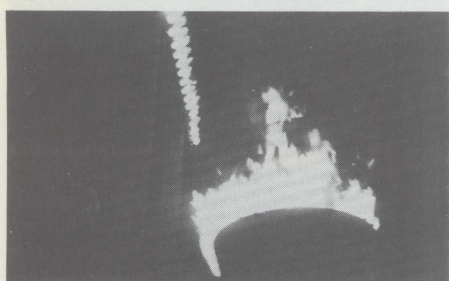
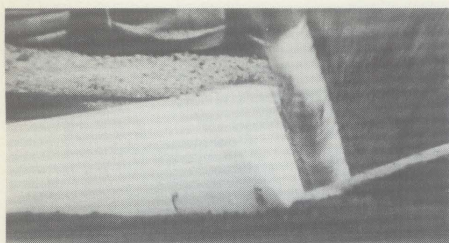
athletes in a pastel bath of foam-rubber chippings (in 1936 they landed on their feet in sand) deters us from attributing to it potential martial utility. For the final stage of the contest, slow motion is abruptly dropped. Thus the graph-like schema proposed for *Berlin*, fanciful though it may at first sight appear, would certainly not fit *Tokyo*, since here the rhythmic climax (marked by subsequent relaxation into normal speed) has been shifted from the dramatic climax of the winning vault; and the suggestion that the contingency of action may be redeemed or sanctified by the immutability of aesthetic form is simply not present. When the event is over, the camera lingers, despite the darkness, upon the faces of the departing contestants as they vanish into the crawling grain of the film's emulsion.

Partly because of the height involved, the treatment of the pole-vault in *Berlin* exemplifies very clearly a technique which is used repeatedly throughout this film, but almost never in *Tokyo*: the combination of slow motion with a low camera position. It is precisely this combination which a studio special effects man would employ to create the impression that a model was life-size—or that a person was a giant. As things get larger, their mass increases as the cube of their linear dimensions; but the power available to move them (whether external or internal) does not—as we instinctively



recognise from a comparison of the motions of waves and ripples or of the performances of mice and elephants. To shoot slow motion from a low angle, then, is to encourage an interpretation in this sense. We are asked to constitute the athlete's image in the mode of the larger-than-life.

But there is another aspect to the use of slow motion in events where, as is partly true of the pole-vault, the athlete is raising his own weight against gravity by sustained muscular control. Here the effect, without the low angle and its hint of gigantism, is to suggest a preternatural strength, since the slow motion minimises the apparent contribution of momentum; and even with the low angle, such implication of enhanced strength is available to precisely the extent that we reject the implication of enhanced size. *Berlin* offers many examples of this: two pole-vaults (the second in the decathlon) and gymnastic displays on rings, horizontal bars and horse—in fact, so far as I can see, every event which would fit the category.



The Tokyo pole-vault: 'the treatment is . . . either cursory or deft, according to our predisposition'

These events, with the partial exception of the pole-vault already discussed, are all presented at normal speed in *Tokyo*. Indeed, a tentative contrast may be found in *Tokyo's* use of slow motion for the women's shot-put where, since it is a question of imparting momentum to another object, the effect is to make the effort seem disproportionate to the results obtained.

The moulding of the slow-motion shots into the rhythm of the surrounding action, which we have already observed in the *Berlin* pole-vault, diverts attention from their nature as trick photography—as requiring to be construed in a sense distinct from that of the normal speed material. This quasi-illusionism is further abetted by the use of sound. In *Tokyo* practically every occurrence of slow motion is signalled by an immediate change in sound quality: either the introduction of music or, more often, a sudden eerie hush in which only a few selected and distorted noises reach us—for example, the sonorous clang of mallet on starting-blocks in the very first event of the film. But in *Berlin*, if music is not used, the natural effects are continued without change of quality or pitch. The assumption that the pitch of a sound will vary with its speed may well be a recent addition to our perceptual apparatus, since it did not hold good for the steam organ, the pianola or the musical box; but it was surely well enough established by

1936—and is certainly so today—for the lack of such variation to be read as implying that the action we are watching is being replayed at the speed of its occurrence.

It may be objected that I am making heavy weather of this: that no one is misled, and that we perceive slow motion merely as a slow representation of a quick event in which we are permitted to see more than we otherwise would. I do not deny that this is our primary perception, or that for some people—a PT instructor, perhaps, approaching the film only in a spirit of analytical curiosity—it may exhaust the matter. But film affords an inflexion of experience; and even analysis of movement does not represent a realm of pure enquiry from which emotion, value and the darker passions of the intellect are excluded. I once met a child who, at the age of seven, had suffered nightmares for a week after seeing a time-lapse film of a flower opening. A 7-year-old would not be likely to imagine she had been confronted with a new strain of sentient orchid. Such an interpretation might be quite proper in a fiction film; but to perceive a film as documentary is to assume that what is signified is what was recorded. The child's nightmares resulted from her discovery that, when brought within the time-scale of human perception, this was how plant life really behaved.

But slow motion, like most other elements of film language, is capable of being invested, by its function within a given text, with meaning (or, as I would prefer to say, the potential of meaning) peculiar to that text: meaning which is otherwise arbitrary, unmotivated and at times even antagonistic to the more naturalistic meanings discussed above. A recent example is provided by the TV series *Six Million Dollar Man*, where slow motion is used to signify extreme speed. (The difficulty here, presumably, is that speeded-up action tends to look comical—either intrinsically or by association with Mack Sennett.)

Berlin devotes an entire reel of prologue to an attempt to attach symbolic values to its use of slow motion. The brooding progress of a sub-Wagnerian melody introduces the ruins of classical temples. Heavy filtering blackens the skies, so that buildings and sculpture are isolated from the dazzle of Grecian light. These are dissolved slowly through accelerated shots of clouds which serve not only to shroud them in Nordic gloom but also to suggest the telescoping of time-scale, the moil and ferment of history against which the masonry and statuary may stand as ideals unchallengeable and eternal. Camera movements of funereal pomp merge into the slow-motion gestures of nude athletes posed to match antique carvings. The Olympic torch (a Nazi invention, incidentally) is carried across Europe in a journey through space and also, by implication, through time; and the black-sky motif, which persists throughout the interminable travelling map shot—so that the flame will return to life only in the present, and in Germany—makes it uneasily prophetic of a night bombing run. There is an undeniable frisson in the moment when the fire is ignited in the Berlin stadium. If we endorse the symbolism towards which the sequence has been striving, this may entail a surge of vicarious pride. If not, it is more likely

to express our horror at the recognition that such pathological kitsch could blossom into political reality. The merciless heroes have returned from a Valhalla thinly disguised as Mount Olympus*.

But political reality is relevant to these films not only in so far as our historical awareness influences the way we will attribute mood to an interplay of connotations—a procedure to which my use of such words as 'brooding' and 'funereal' testifies—but also in that it informs the nature of the event filmed. Let us now, with a view to drawing together the ideas already mooted, return to the social meanings of sport as ritual.

The social idea most obviously enshrined in sport is competition. 'Competition', in its capitalist use, is a mystificatory concept, since it elides the idea of competitiveness between businesses, which is supposed to stimulate efficiency and investment and to keep prices low, with that of competitiveness between individuals for advancement within the system: the former increasingly irrelevant in an age of monopolies and transnationals; the latter increasingly unlikely to secure much beyond survival. But it is also a blurred concept, since few business concerns could prosper without a certain minimum of co-operation on the part of their workforce. What is required, then, if the ideal of competition is not to prove totally destructive, is a countervailing ideal of collaboration; but a collaboration which will not challenge the credibility of competition as the sovereign value of the system. Such a collaboration finds its perfect expression in the idea of the team. When, in the tradition of Dr. Arnold, team sports are extolled for their character-building qualities, we must understand what quality of character is in question. The distinctive feature of a sports team is that it is defined, not by a task to be accomplished, but by its opposition to other teams. It thus expresses a collaboration by nature subordinate to competition—a collaboration circumscribed and empty of content.

Team sports as such are given short shrift in *Berlin*—perhaps simply because they are not central to the Olympics, perhaps because their extension in time and space makes them difficult to encompass on film. The treatment of football, for example, is perfunctory. Cutaways are used which are clearly trims of shots occurring, presumably in their proper context, elsewhere; and the commentary, at least in the English version, even lapses wearily into the past tense. But in a sequence such as the pole-vault, with flawless integration between the reaction of the claque and the action of their champions—a piece of rhythmic modelling which would be remarkable enough even if slow motion were not employed—it is difficult not to see the recovery of the concept of team at the level of nationhood: a team which leaves free scope for the chosen individual as romantic hero; a team whose collaboration is not only empty of true content but is indeed purely mythic.

*The symbolism of this famous prologue—where, for example, classical Greek youth seems to be consumed in the fire from which, at (the new?) dawn, the Olympic torch will be lit—would provide a gold mine for close textual analysis. My concern here, however, is only to identify certain predominant themes.

Vicarious identification with a group defined solely by its exclusion of other groups is a necessary (though of course not sufficient) condition of fascism.

The finalists in the pole-vault happen to be American and Japanese. But it is worth remarking the number of instances in *Berlin* where the introduction of slow motion coincides with the appearance of the German contestant—regardless of whether or not he eventually wins. If we eliminate cases where the contestant is not identified (as in certain lyrical sequences), or where no German is participating, or where slow motion is used (as in the steeplechase) for the purpose of ridicule, the proportion is close to 65 per cent. And even if we include all these questionable cases, the figure still reaches 30 per cent—which, with 50 nations competing, is high enough to be considered significant. The pious internationalism of the commentary notwithstanding, it is preponderantly upon the German athletes that the cultural blessings gathered up by slow motion in its measured tread through history are seen to fall: custodians of a mythic heroism which their victories may confirm but their defeats do not diminish, and in which their compatriots, merely by applauding it, may share.

Since film works not with chains of consecutive logic but with connotations, ambiguities, valencies which interlock at the viewer's discretion, its meanings are difficult to set out in linear form. But somewhere within this web of associations—the use of slow motion with low angle and with normal sound, the intercutting with normal-speed footage to confirm a naturalistic reading as implying gigantism, the further investing of slow motion with the values of classical antiquity conceived as supra-historical, the seamless welding of athletes' action with supporters' reaction so that they are perceived as participating in the same act, the discharging of the accumulated potential of slow motion upon nationality in general and German nationality in particular, the conferring of timeless legitimacy upon an event by the duplication of its structure in the architecture of the sequence—we may surely see a significance whose intellectual correlative lies somewhere at the junction of the concepts Essence, Nation and Destiny.

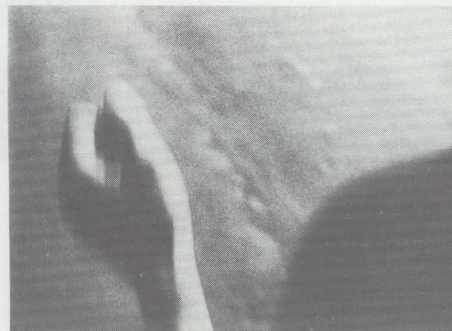
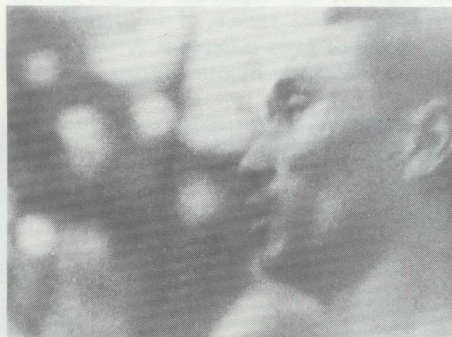
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I have heard it suggested that *Tokyo* is 'not really about sport at all,' since 'Ichikawa doesn't seem to care who's winning.' The idea of 'winning', however, is not immune from social inflexion. The unique winner, the world's best who attains his status through a phased succession of eliminatory contests, serves in sport as we know it to posit competition as entailing that one person's success be bought with another's failure. Other conceptions are possible. Judo, for example, whose origins are feudal, was organised from the start upon a system of 'grades' reflecting degrees of accomplishment against which adepts could be measured. (The contestants in a Judo bout are of course competing; the distinction lies in the fact that they are not competing to *deprive* each other of anything.) Having observed, then, that *Tokyo* avoids such uses of slow motion as would confer super-

humanity upon the athletes, we should perhaps, in seeking out its more positive strategies, take our cue from the above criticisms and pay special heed to the ways in which it encourages or discourages certain inflexions of the competitive idea.

Of a total of twelve uses of slow motion in *Tokyo*, five occur in races (and of the six significant uses, four). This compares with only one, and that only in a qualifying heat, out of twenty or so slow-motion passages in *Berlin*. One obvious point to be made about the presentation of a race in slow motion is that it negates the main objective of running: the attainment of speed (for it is not as if, as with *Six Million Dollar Man*,

The Berlin marathon: a close view of the winner, Kitei Son, and subjective shots. 'We, the audience, are Kitei Son looking at our own feet ...'



some contrary symbolism had been established). But the impression of speed conveyed by film depends not simply on duration but on lens and camera angle; and we may understand the use of slow motion for a race as implying a recognition that the reality of speed—as experienced either by the runner or by an observer who shares the runner's temporal co-ordinates—is inaccessible to the film medium. With this in mind we may perceive the slow-motion race either as a surreal dream, in which our capacities for escape are inexplicably paralysed, or as an analysis either of muscular action or of tactics; and in this last instance it is at least arguable that slow motion represents the runner's subjective time-scale more accurately than would the

hurly-burly of normal pace. It is not clear that any of these interpretations has a special claim to legitimacy; but each entails a critique not only of the real event but also of the relation of film convention to it.

It is characteristic of *Tokyo*, in contrast to *Berlin*, that slow motion is used not only for an event itself but for its anticipation and aftermath. In the women's 800 metres it constitutes what would now be called an 'action replay' in which we are permitted to observe the seraphic smile of Ann Packer as she breasts the tape. In the men's 100 metres—which, being the first event shown, sets the style for our response to the film's coverage—slow motion is sustained throughout the fixing of the starting-blocks, the wait for the pistol, the race itself and the run-down and relaxation. The runners are seen in isolation both before and after the race; and the slow motion, spacing out the temporal congestion, enables us to preserve a sense of their individuality during the run. Furthermore, where a rendering at normal speed would present us with a contrast between people poised for action (i.e. behaving more slowly than usual) and people sprinting (i.e. behaving more quickly than usual), slow motion diminishes this contrast by presenting both components at a 'slower than usual' tempo. The breaking of the tape does not register as a climax, since it does not provoke an immediate fall-off in the degree of our concentration. Thus the sprint emerges less as a laboratory experiment, in which competitors are subordinate to the numerical abstraction of their times and positions, than as a moment in the flux of experience where a number of individuals meet, intermingle and part again.

When we turn to the treatment of the marathon in the two films, we first notice, as with the pole-vault, an overall similarity which will throw the significant differences into sharp relief. Both take us to the halfway turn-about very quickly. Both show us the refreshment stands, spectators lining the route and runners dropping out from exhaustion. Both focus attention on the eventual winner during the last stretch before re-entry into the stadium; and in both versions this concentration of attention is accompanied by a transition from natural sound to music. Both end with harrowing images of blistered feet and hollow faces as competitors collapse on crossing the finishing line. *Tokyo* pokes some fun at officialdom which is not permitted in *Berlin*; and *Berlin* makes use of the roadside field-radio stations as a device for keeping us informed as to the relative positions of the contestants; but these differences are of little account.

What really distinguishes these two marathons is the way the winners are treated in the home stretch. In *Berlin*, as the initial front-runner drops out and Kitei Son, hitherto sharing second place, pulls ahead of his British companion, a shot of Son passing a Japanese flag leads into a succession of close views of his legs, his arms, his face, his shadow. These are intercut, and later inter-dissolved, with shots of passing trees and hedgerows from what can only be interpreted as the point of view, if not of Son himself, at least of a runner following this route. (It is somewhat ironical that a

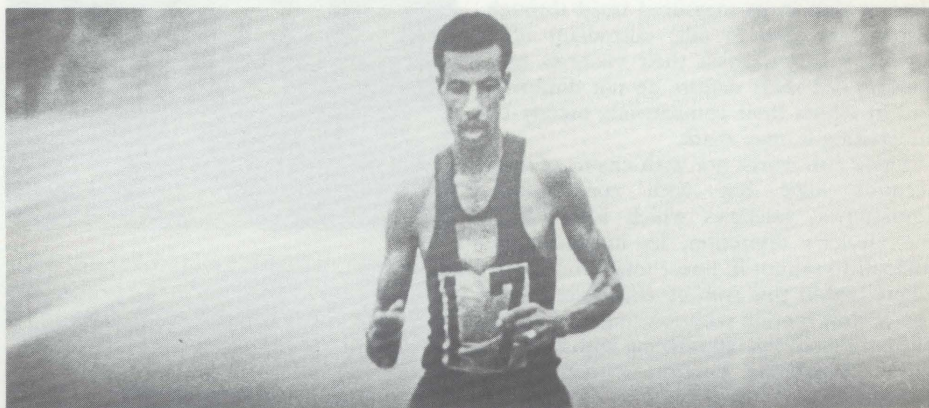
shot of the flag should, in a manner characteristic of *Berlin*, be used to cue a change of quality in the sequence, since Son was in fact a Korean competing, very much against his will, under the Imperial Japanese colours.) The climax is reached when a very close shot of Son's pumping elbows, seen from alongside, is followed by a shot of his feet seen unambiguously from his own viewpoint. Let us be clear about what is involved here. It is conceivable—though I think unlikely—that what we are seeing is 'genuine' in the sense that the feet are those of Kitei Son and that the shot was actually taken during the 1936 marathon. Such a shot could have been achieved by rigging the camera upside down on a cantilevered boom travelling just ahead of, and above, the runner. But what matters is the function of this shot within its context. The only possible interpretation is that we, the audience, are Kitei Son looking at our own feet. In what sense may this be understood?

Such a device, the 'subjective' use of the camera, is familiar in narrative cinema; and we may idly wonder whether it might not have proved acceptable, even in *Berlin*, if Son had somehow been built up as a fictional representative of himself. It is not, after all, a question of truth versus falsehood. Neither is it a question of actuality versus manipulation. All shots are actual in that they are shots of something; and all shots are manipulated in that they have subjected this something to mechanical transformation into an image. But what documentary does is to specify that the image shall not be dissociated from the actuality. Though the label 'documentary' may be affixed at whim, its confirmation requires that the viewer interpret the film in this specified sense: that a shot must retain its 'vertical' relation to actuality whilst functioning 'horizontally' as a constituent of a film world. The term 'documentary' thus describes, strictly speaking, not the nature of the material but the chosen manner of our response to it. Once we are committed to this response, however, our failure to construe a shot as signifying what it appears to record is enough to deny it meaning altogether.

If the shot of Son's feet is to be accorded documentary meaning, then, it must be not simply as 'a shot from Son's viewpoint' but as a shot obtained in the contortionate manner already described: a shot used upside down, with the feet which should be running towards us facing away. This is not necessarily impossible. It is entirely a question of whether what is signified will, in its context, cohere into something we are prepared to accredit as a reality. We may readily imagine that the shot would create no problem in, say, a training film for athletes, whose projected reality would be that of muscular dynamics and lung control and where there would be a clear purpose to the inclusion of the shot—*understood* as upside down—from the trainees' viewpoint. But in the *Berlin* marathon no such option is presented. Whereas the 'subjective' shots of hedgerows (which may, indeed, have been taken at quite a different time) can be absorbed without difficulty as being 'any runner's view of the course', and the sidelong 'objective' shots as demonstrating Son's movement—the two sets sparking

from each other a poetic statement of the runner's endurance and effort—the shot of Son from his own viewpoint defies interpretation unless we are prepared to read it as recording—not merely signifying, but recording—his individual experience.

A reading which we cannot endorse emotionally can never be more than a speculation upon the possible meaning of the work for others. But it is at least conceivable that, for someone able to endorse the philosophy which has informed *Berlin* up to this crucial passage—someone, that is, whose construction of reality does not exclude the idea of mystical participation in the acts of the hero through the shared essence of nationhood—the shot of Son's feet might attain the meaning to which it seems to aspire. For me, however (and here the logic of my argument obliges me to drop the polite stance of impersonality), the sequence loses coherence at this point, disintegrating into its constituents.



For *Tokyo*, in contrast, the marathon runners embody no ideal which transcends them. The commentary, for example, respects their personality by telling us what each does for a living. Shortly after this, a series of almost abstract close-ups of Abebe Bikela, the Ethiopian who will win the race, leads abruptly into three sustained slow-motion shots: a mid-shot from three-quarters front, a side shot tilting down to the feet and a close-up held in profile. The third of these lasts for a minute and a half—and seems much longer. There is an obvious practical advantage in taking this shot in slow motion, since it flattens out the jerkiness which would otherwise make a narrow-angle close-up of a runner impossible to watch. Yet it is not only the camera, but a roadside observer equally, who would be denied this view in real time. The slow motion thus serves to enhance a propensity of the narrow-angle lens which may be remarked elsewhere (for example, in the men's and women's shot-put sequences): its suggestion of a far object closely observed, of privacy honoured yet outwitted. No one was ever so close to an athlete in action—except himself. Yet the proximity underlines the inaccessibility of his experience.

Just as *Berlin* employs a prologue to charge its uses of slow motion with the potential for the generation of specific meanings, so there is strategically placed early in *Tokyo* a shot whose function appears to be, in view of its minimal information-content, simply to predispose us to certain responses to its filmic means. A spot of fuzzy red against a

black background quivers, swells and gradually takes shape to reveal itself as a telephoto image of the first glimpse of sunrise. The shot lasts for nearly a minute. It is verbally cued by the word 'Japan', and may be 'justified' by the fact that the rising sun is the emblem of the host nation. But to enjoy the joke is to accede to the use of certain elements which will recur throughout the film: the long-focus (i.e. narrow-angle) lens; the sustained hold on a single set-up; the shot which begins in a cryptic, puzzling manner. Slow motion soon presents itself as a fourth member of this group. All four are means of separation, of isolation; but whereas the narrow angle and slow motion serve to isolate the selected action (the former spatially, the latter temporally) from its context in actuality, so that stress is placed on the image itself and its problematical relation to the world, the cryptic start and the long hold serve to isolate the image (again, the former spatially and the

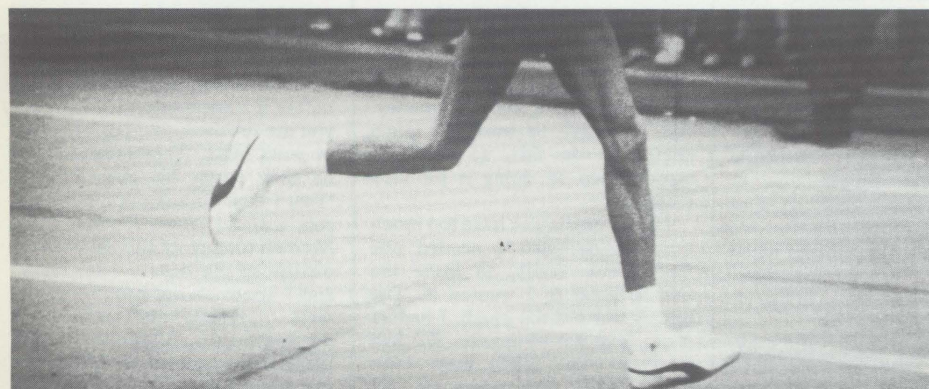
latter temporally) from its context in the structure of the sequence.

A clear example of the functioning of such separative devices is to be seen in the bicycle race sequence, where close-ups of flashing spokes are intercut with massed long-shots of cyclists reduced—not by actual slow motion but simply by the telephoto effect—to strenuous immobility. This calls into question any idea of the 'objective' symbolising of speed. Context is restored only for the pain of an injured competitor.

Devices which serve synthesis in *Berlin* serve analysis in *Tokyo*. It is probable that, without the prior example of the sunrise as a gloss upon its usages, many of us would respond to the long-held, narrow-angle slow-motion profile of Abebe Bikela with frustration, baffled by its lack of incident and by its apparent betrayal of our expectations, perhaps suspecting it of trying to browbeat us into identification at some 'emotional' level. But, construed as a linguistic element isolated by sheer duration from its function in a chain of syntax, it becomes, like a work of beautiful calligraphy, an object of contemplation in its own right. To be confronted with this image of Bikela's face, impassive, the beads of sweat flowing gracefully from his chin with the rhythm of his movement, is to experience the dilation, beyond the normal bounds of film discourse, of a brief instant in an event to whose gruelling duration film could scarcely otherwise do justice. The entire race becomes subsumed into its every moment. The image is that of a man locked

into his own eternity, since only eternity is undiminished by division.

This sequence does not require, then, for its very comprehension, our endorsement of a notion of mystical union with the athlete. Neither does it offer much material for our construction of the notion of competition in its capitalist sense. Indeed, if we agree that such a notion is embedded as a meaning in the ritual of sport as at present understood, we may see in *Tokyo's* use of slow motion—as part of a fourfold strategy of separation—a desire to filter this meaning from the material, to inhibit the reconstruction of it in our reading, and thus tentatively to posit a world of sport where, whatever the reasons for which a person may be honoured, it will not be for the deprivations he visits upon others. When normal speed is resumed, progressing to a wide shot of the stadium, we are somewhat shocked by the renewed perception of the athletes as spectacle—as in some sense public property.



Tokyo marathon: three slow-motion shots of Abebe Bikela, the final close-up being held for ninety seconds

Bikela passes the winning post, having paced himself so economically that he is able to indulge in a few loosening-up exercises; and the commentary informs us, in a matter-of-fact way, that he has just undergone an operation for appendicitis and has been running against his doctor's advice. His win is thus presented to us as marking a triumph, primarily, over his own limits. But the heroism is not ours; and we are left to judge it by whatever moral standards our experience makes available.

Whether as a result of selection, camera angle or an actual change of manners between 1936 and 1964, there is a distinct difference between the ways the medal-winners are represented in the two films. Where *Berlin* has them salute, starry-eyed and extrovert, *Tokyo* prefers them to weep, smile inwardly or just look embarrassed. The suggestion that *Tokyo* needs to suppress elements of the Olympic reality in order to

expose latent alternative social meanings may account for the oddly ambivalent mood—a sort of reverential mockery—which pervades this film. The dissociative methods employed lie close, of course, to those of humour. What is clear is that the mode of signification we attribute to a film's primary structures, in our instinctive attempt to assign it meaning, will invade our perception of 'weaker' structures which, in other contexts, might not have seemed significant at all.

Thus the onset of night seems, in the *Berlin* pole-vault, to supply the pretext for a Manichean opposition of light and darkness, a play of mutual exclusions, where in *Tokyo* it merely makes things difficult to see. A comparable contrast may be read into the outwardly similar endings of the two marathon sequences. *Tokyo* has some close-ups—intense, bleak, sorrowing. *Berlin* goes into slow motion at this point in a way which seems to overreach, and thus to formalise, the runners' exhausted deceleration.

the perception of meanings is a constitutive act—constitutive not only of the meanings but also, inevitably and simultaneously, of oneself—is under some obligation to offer examples of how his own outlook has been modified by experience of a film. One of the reasons I chose the Olympics films for comparison is that I can quote *Tokyo* as having led me to question the assumption, perhaps reflecting the superimposition of *Berlin* upon an English schooling, that sport was *per se* proto-Nazi.

It is sometimes averred that, whereas Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* is a piece of explicit Nazi propaganda, her Olympics film may be enjoyed in strictly non-political terms. It seems to me, on the contrary, that whereas *Triumph of the Will* may be construed in an anti-Nazi sense, as exposing the tedium of ceremonial, much of the Olympics film fails to take on full meaning unless we are prepared to invest in our own perception of it certain at least near-fascist values. Here, however, we return to the dichotomy stated at the head of this article: between judgments apparently made upon the film and judgments made, apparently through the film, upon the world.

My account of the *Berlin* pole-vault differs from that of the marathon in that the latter records a breakdown of perceived meaning beyond which any further analysis must, whatever its interest to history, be purely speculative, whilst the former records a meaning perceived as rejected. We must ask ourselves, however, whether or not such a perception in some sense commits us to fascist values. One view might be that it does so in a tentative and provisional manner. But it is perhaps relevant to observe that whereas, before seeing *Tokyo*, I understood *Berlin* as a relatively neutral film about a relatively fascist subject, I came subsequently to understand it as a fascist film about a subject which, though by no means ideologically neutral, offered at least the potential for other constructions. Further, it would be more accurate to say that I came to understand it as a *would-be* fascist film about such a subject, since a concomitant of this change of perspective was that the 'success' I had attributed to certain sequences began to ossify into mere expertise—that is, to receive integration at that cruder level at which we customarily characterise a work as 'empty' or 'meretricious' and where meanings denied to the material are imputed by default to its maker.

The coherence which we impose in rejecting is not identical to that which we impose in accrediting a documentary's meaning. In the former, our perception seems merely to articulate the world of the communication. In the latter, the communication seems to articulate our perception of the world.

In final homage to Ichikawa's *Tokyo*, I should like to mention a race in which slow motion is not used. At the end of the 10,000 metres, in which at least one competitor has been seen to drop out, we cut directly from the exultant face of the winner to the arrival of the Sri Lankan who, far behind, 'puts on a burst of speed' to finish last. Like the sound of one hand clapping, he is the victor in an event in which he is the only contestant; and the crowd responds with an ovation. Such a conclusion is, but is not merely, the product of an editor's artifice.

There are some haunting *pietàs* of towel-swathed figures collapsing into the arms of uniformed officials. But where the *Tokyo* athletes suffer in the mortality of the flesh, *Berlin* seems to countenance only the apotheosis of victory or the crucifixion of failure.

Between brute reality and our response to a documentary we may distinguish several stages: reality structured to propose meanings; meanings perceived through social engagement with that reality; elements of the structured reality appropriated by film; film structured to propose further meanings; meanings perceived through aesthetic engagement with the film by someone who, however, is already engaged socially with the prior reality. There is a tendency nowadays to treat film as if its meanings were guaranteed in some supra-ideological heaven. Anyone who holds to the view that

In The Picture

Fassbinder After Despair

The Berlin Festival, where he served on the Jury, fitted quite conveniently into Rainer Werner Fassbinder's schedule, since he had just finished shooting *Despair*, a two and a half million dollar English language film financed by Geria Productions—a tax-shelter company which is also making Billy Wilder's *Fedora*. His jury duties involved him as intensely as everything else to which he commits himself, though he was complaining about films 'that are not films—only television films. Film for me begins when it works with all the possibilities a film has. Film has camera, film has light, film has places and story and actors, and must work with them all. Then it is a film. At the moment, all over the world, they think that to tell a story is enough.'

As to *Despair*, the late Vladimir Nabokov was at first reluctant to expose another of his works to the cinema, but relented after he discovered something about Fassbinder's career and reputation. The script is by Tom Stoppard. 'We worked together for the construction, and he wrote the dialogue. The dialogue is Stoppard's—I had no possibility of doing it without him—but I needed him also for the development from the novel. I had had the story for years without finding a way to make the film I wanted. He gave me the possibility to do it, and I'm very grateful to him for giving me a direction I did not find out for myself.'

The film stars Dirk Bogarde and Andrea Ferreol. Bogarde plays a Russian émigré who has become a chocolate manufacturer in Germany in the early 1930s. The political, social and economic turmoil of the time contributes to the man's personal identity crisis. 'It's a point which comes in every life, when you realise that nothing more will happen—no new ideas or new sensations in your life. From this point you have to work really hard to like the things you like, to feel the things you feel. You have to recreate, to remake them. There comes a moment when you have to tell yourself, for instance, that you like coffee, because you know you like coffee. . .

Most people arrange themselves—compromise—when they realise they have reached this moment. Maybe most of them don't even realise that life is finished. This man, Hermann, doesn't want to compromise; his solution is to enter a land of madness. I don't know, because I haven't been there, but I think it's a land where you can have another new life. What he does I think is a principle of hope. Not a simple hope of changing systems, but a kind of individual hope. Maybe it's strange to speak of optimism when someone goes into madness; but I stay behind this idea, I like it better than compromise.'

Did he find problems directing for the first time in English—a language which until recently he has been unwilling to attempt at all in conversation? 'Even with Bogarde it was a problem. Even if I spoke better English, I would still have difficulty, because you cannot realise exactly the pronunciation and intonation and so you have to do it with your musicality and feeling rather than with words. I didn't know if maybe all was wrong. If the dialogue is very quick for instance I cannot follow it and at the same time watch the camera and what the actors are doing. But you know Lubitsch didn't speak English properly till the day of his death. Douglas Sirk told me that he did not speak English as well as me! And of course he worked in a very interesting and good way with the language. There I think you can see that you can work with another language if you have musicality.'

'Bogarde was excellent. He even helped the other actors, correcting them, and that helped me lose my fear. He really helped me very much. Not that he did many things; but it was the way he worked, the seriousness. Some actors concentrate for the twenty seconds they are shooting; but he concentrates the whole day. Of course he can talk about football or something, but the work concentration still stays. You feel it. He is the person he plays the whole day. Before we worked I did not understand why he says he can make only one film every year. Now I understand: when you give so much, it is not possible to do it every three months, to play for me

and then in three months for another director.'

(Bogarde apparently reciprocates the admiration. He is on record as saying: 'It is the first time that I've obeyed a director absolutely, with the exception of Visconti, that is. I haven't spoken to Rainer off the set, as our social lives don't coincide. He comes to life again at night and I go to bed at 10 o'clock. Outside of work I can't say I know him at all. Yet I don't think I have ever been so favoured by any director. I am in almost every shot, and I have a great responsibility because Rainer is expressing himself through Hermann.')

Fassbinder insists that the international cast and big budget do not change his approach: 'The money merely gives me the possibility to make the same film I would do with less money, but to do it in a way that does not demand so much energy from me. I had to learn to make films in a very short time, and I had to learn to make them so that the audience cannot see that we didn't have enough money. But you have to waste so much energy to do this, so that you cannot keep on doing it for very long. . .'

In fact he did not have too much time on *Despair*. 'I needed one more week, really, to make the film as good as I wanted it. The money was not too much. I had 42 days; it is not so much. We had to work some really hard days. There were days when we did seven minutes of finished film. Other days we did only one minute because we had a new location

where maybe we were only shooting one day. We had to make very complicated lighting, that might take five hours; and then we would use the rest of the eight hours, and get one minute. It's not just time—the money goes in the décor and goes in the costumes and goes to the actors and goes on locations; the studio (Bavaria, in Munich) is very expensive to shoot in. . . No, I did not have too much money.' (Fassbinder's production designer Rolf Zehetbauer has in fact gone to great pains to get right the rather elusive period, through the clothes, the cars and the actual locations. These included Berlin's Bleibtreustrasse, an old hotel at Oberhofen on Lake Thun, an antique chocolate works and the Erasmi and Carstens marzipan factory in Lübeck, which was repainted purple for the occasion.)

Fassbinder recognises the film as a turning point. He will not return—at least for a while—to the old frenetic style of working. 'I did it for ten years, and now I want to work normally. The way I worked before it's not normal work. When you are finished, you have a motor in your head. Tatatatatatat.' Can he slow down his pace at will? 'Yes, I can. I must press myself to stay without work. I could go to Munich tomorrow and shoot a new picture in ten days. I can, really; and I know it's not good for me to do it. . . There's one picture I will do maybe in November. With money again and time. If they get the cast I want, I do it, and if they don't I don't do it, and that's all. It's an American co-production made in Los Angeles, because the

'Despair': Dirk Bogarde, Andrea Ferreol



story happens there. It's the first time I have a normal script, written by an American writer. It's a good script. It's not genius or anything—it's a good script to do a B picture. I think I can make a very good film, and I want to try to see what happens when I work with a script I didn't follow from the beginning. It's really interesting to me to see if I can do it, like Howard Hawks did, or Raoul Walsh... They had scripts...'

Perhaps America will be the answer to his personal frustrations: 'Every day Germany becomes more mediocre, more provincial, more reactionary. This is a special time of soft fascism, where you really cannot say it is fascism. There is censorship where you cannot say there is censorship. The most terrible thing they can do, they make the artists censor in their own heads. I like it better when there are rules written down, so that I know what I have to fight against. But here it looks like the most free country in the world, but it really isn't; and every day you can see it losing even a part of freedom. It is really better if you live in a country which is not your own. Maybe in America it is the same; but perhaps in America there is not so much pain for me as I feel here.'

DAVID ROBINSON

Restrictions—More or Less?

The censorship situation in Britain is never free from surprises, and the present is a particularly rich period of activity right across the spectrum. After major reports in recent years on almost all aspects of freedom of expression and on other media of public communication, it is now the turn of the cinema in both respects. The Interim Action Committee on the Film Industry, following on the Terry Report, held its first meeting on 11 May. Shortly afterwards the Home Secretary appointed Professor Bernard Williams to chair a new committee to review the laws on obscenity, indecency and violence in publications, displays and entertainments and to review the film censorship system.

At the same time, while the Criminal Law Bill (to reform various aspects of criminal law and procedure) was in committee stage in the House of Commons, several members urged a reform of the law on film censorship. This had been thrown into some confusion by a recent series of, mostly private, prosecutions of cinema owners, distributors and others, culminating in the astonishing judgment of the Court of Appeal requiring the Greater London Council to incorporate all the relevant rules of criminal law into their discretionary censorship guidelines for permitting films to be publicly shown (a sort of 'double barrier' theory). The change in party control of the GLC in the recent elections has, however, involved a noticeable

change in its attitude to film censorship. And Enid Wistrich, who with her colleagues urged the incorporation of films into the general law of obscenity so as to make possible a radical relaxation of the censorship of films for adults, is no longer there to savour the situation following the new legislative changes.

The Government responded to opinion in the House by introducing at Report stage a wholly new clause to bring films under the Obscene Publications Act 1959, as had been recommended by the Law Commission in its report on Conspiracy. Previously, films had been expressly excluded on the ground that they were already adequately regulated by the local authority and BBFC censorship system. The effectiveness of that system had, however, been attenuated by the recent spate of court decisions and the reformist moves by Mrs. Wistrich on the GLC, traditionally the pace-setter in film censorship matters for the whole of England.

The Bill, which passed into law in early August, places films in roughly the same position as theatrical performances, making them subject to the general system of obscenity law, including a 'public interest' defence, but leaving intact the censorship superstructure (unlike the theatre, where censorship had been abolished). The common law offences (e.g. conspiracy to corrupt public morals) are abolished as far as indecent etc. film exhibitions are concerned; consequently films can now only be prosecuted under statutory provisions, and such prosecutions can only be brought with the consent of the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP). The result is that, if one disregards the censorship position, film exhibitions and the commercial trade in most films may be attacked under the Act (and any other Act, including the Post Office and Customs legislation) but not under any common law rules (conspiracy charges generally would thus seem to be ruled out), and that there are no exceptions for private showings, whether in film clubs or societies or in the home.

A last-minute amendment to the new clause excluded 8mm films (indeed anything under 16mm) from the Act, so as to facilitate the task of the police in combating the traffic in hard core pornographic materials, of which 8mm films form a considerable part (1,492 such films were seized by the police in the year to May 1977). This, however, may have unexpected consequences in the future, as new forms of commercial marketing develop based on the home movie market. Commercial distributors of 'regular' films in 8mm for private viewing will not have the protection of the Act. Nor probably will suppliers of video cassettes, for the Act defines cinematograph exhibition as an exhibition of moving pictures produced on a screen by means which include the projection of light, and



'N.N.': cartoon from Zagreb Film, by Borijov Dovnikovic

it is doubtful whether this would cover screening on a television set.

A chance to test the new Act arose shortly before the Bill became an Act. At the end of July the Compton Cinema Club played to its members Pasolini's controversial *Salò*. Complaints followed and the police, after consultations with the DPP, twice seized projection copies of the film. The DPP then announced his intention to bring proceedings, not under the new Act but for keeping a disorderly house and giving an indecent exhibition.

When the new provisions were introduced into the Bill it was said that they were intended as a temporary measure, until the Williams Committee had reported on the whole question of film censorship. Consequently, many of the rough edges were deliberately left to be settled later. There are indeed other ideas floating in the wind, and several MPs have been closely watching the French system of fiscal censorship for films. Raphael Tuck MP, for instance, urged again in July that the Government should 'impose a heavy tax on pornography.'

The complexity of the situation does not stop there, however. The new changes were not unconnected with the interests of cinema exhibitors. The distributors also have been involved in other developments, which are beginning to get out of hand. As part of the successful KRS campaign to stop pirating of films by theft of prints and unauthorised copying, the criminal law of conspiracy was brought in and confirmed by the courts. Many violations of copyright in films now become potential conspiracies against the copyright owner. This has been stretched far, and a pending prosecution of Bob Monkhouse, a well-known private collector, is said to involve films which have been imported for his private use from sources outside the country, i.e. where the action of the copyright law in normal circumstances is marginal or non-existent. The latest development came on 1 August, when another collector was convicted at the Central Criminal Court of dishonestly receiving a private copy

of a film. In so far as a print may have been actually stolen there is no change in the existing laws. But if the position is to be extended to unauthorised copies, i.e. where the print itself did not physically belong to the film company except notionally under the private law concept of 'conversion' under the Copyright Act, then we are seeing yet another incursion of the criminal law into the circulation of films, and into areas in which it was never the intention of Parliament that it should have such extensive effects.

NEVILLE HUNNINGS

Annecy

The 1977 Annecy Festival of Animation made one welcome break with tradition. As the main animation junket has wandered from France to Yugoslavia to Canada, the Grand Prix has become an almost automatic certainty for a film from the host country. This time (to the delighted surprise of critics who had already chosen stills from a French film they thought must have been earmarked) the award was shared between two films by Dutch animators, both noted for their work at the National Film Board of Canada.

Canada deservedly won the award for the best national entry. Caroline Leaf's *Metamorphosis of Mr. Samsa* didn't quite equal her superlative *The Street*, but still demonstrated a more formidable talent than virtually anyone else. It won a special award for her entire work and shared the critics' prize. Paul Driessen's *David*, one of the Grand Prix winners, is based on the disarming notion of a hero so tiny he is completely invisible to the audience—whom he harangues about the unenviable lot of one so small while he gives hilarious demonstrations of his presence. Eventually he is casually obliterated by a massive moraliser on the conflict between big and little.

For all *David's* marvellous quirkiness, I found another Driessen entry, *The Killing of an Egg*, a more complete success.



William Holden and Billy Wilder on the set of the latter's 'Fedora'

Here a man is disturbed by cries of protest from inside his boiled egg at breakfast. When he persists in cracking it open he in turn becomes appalled by the thunder of a giant spoon cracking away at his ceiling. So maybe we are what we eat? This splendid Dutch joke (or yolk?) is brilliantly hard-boiled in exactly three minutes. Driessen, already known for *Air*, *Cat's Cradle* and *An Old Box*, is as original in style as in content, with a fondness for unnervingly scratchy doodle folk who move with the grace of a one-legged spider. Long may they lurch.

Co Hoedman, who shared the Grand Prix with his NFB film *The Sand Castle*, seems to love labouring under self-imposed difficulties. In *Tchou-Tchou* he animated the figures on all sides of children's playbricks while animating the bricks themselves. He now tops that by animating creatures of sand, solid three-dimensional creatures apparently at the mercy of wind and weather as they change shape and bustle about the crowded, busy screen. *The Sand Castle* may be the most slender of whimsies, but it is a technical wonder alive with warmth, wit and downright charm.

Elsewhere charm was the preserve of the Russians. Feodor Khitrouk's *Icarus and the Philosophers* is a mischievous delight, so deftly scripted, characterised and animated that it becomes a sparkling tribute to nonconformism. It won the Youth award. Another Soviet entry, Youri Norstein's *The Hedgehog and the Fog*, was suddenly eliminated because it had won at Tehran, but the rapture which greeted this joyous children's short was well deserved.

France's only award was the 'First Work' prize to *The Nurse's Ghost* by Michel Longuet, an exceptionally original and obscure piece of graffiti which hinted that animation may have found its own

Otto Muehl. The audience clearly found it no less monstrous than its creator wished.

Apart from the nimble Dutch and impish Russians, other national animation trends were shown by comic Italians, stylish Japanese, alarming Hungarians and pensive Poles. For the British Annecy has become a masochist's paradise. Only three British entries were selected by the all French pre-selection jury out of 36 submitted, and rejects included the latest work of George Dunning, Stan Hayward, Derek Phillips, Antoinette Starkiewicz's *High Fidelity*, Annabel Jankel's striking *Hannah*,

all four dazzling new works by Ian Emes and Bob Godfrey's bawdy *Dear Marjorie Boobs*.

Only the last might be excused exclusion as a late arrival, since the festival was otherwise serviced for the first time by the painstaking secretariat of the National Panel for Film Festivals—who were somewhat startled by Annecy's Anglophobia. One of the three British films that were selected, Ted Rockley's *On the Move* compilation, was omitted from the published programme by a 'printer's error' and wasn't screened at all at one performance. Both other British competitors were first works. Frank Bren's *Helluva Bet in the Wet*, produced at the London International Film School, is an anarchic tale of a horse race doomed by caterpillars, an inventively grotesque work suggesting a surrealist comic strip. Anna Fodorova's *Loop* (BFI Production Board) is a somewhat opaque but intriguing combination of live action and animation. Both films immediately establish their authors as talents to watch.

Given that Annecy thwarted so much of the best of contemporary British animation, it is impossible to guess how representative this generally disappointing festival was of current international work. Some national pride was restored when ballot results for committee places were announced after wrangling by ASIFA, the international animation organisation. Way ahead of the rest was Bob Godfrey, the most unpolitical of contenders. ('It's a record vote,' he confided cheerfully. 'Yes,' said a friend. 'So was Nixon's.') Bottom, and thus off the committee altogether, came Raymond Maillet, director of the Annecy Festival.

DEREK HILL

Schuman's TV Follies

Howard Schuman is best known for the Thames television series *Rock Follies*, a serio-comic saga following the fortunes of a trio of would-be rock singers, the Little Ladies—which in life aping art fashion spawned two best-selling LPs. But he's also author of at least seven single plays, all unusual in content and/or treatment. Even more unusual is the fact that they were accepted for transmission, given British TV's fondness for naturalistic drama, the drama of the straightforward and expected, hardly disturbing, echoing the domestic hearth.

But 'British TV impressed me, as it does most Americans, and I wanted to have a go'—thus he explains his defection from theatre to TV with his first work screened, *Vérité* (Thames, 1973). Schuman, an expatriate New Yorker, had previously worked in American fringe theatre, writing revue sketches and the like. He also wrote an off-Broadway musical, which flopped—fortunately, he now says, since this gave him and his partner an excuse to come to Britain, encouraged by a British agent. Apart from writing lyrics for two stage productions, Schuman's career in London theatre remained steady at rock bottom, another incentive for moving on to another medium. He shares his non-naturalism with the recent generation of playwrights who've turned to TV, such as the other Howards, Brenton and Barker. But he recalls that even at Berkeley, where he majored in Political Science, he wrote a 'surrealistic' play.

'At gut level I find naturalism boring,' he says. 'It's unselective, but it's a false premise, it's a sort of lie, and really it is selective. I'm

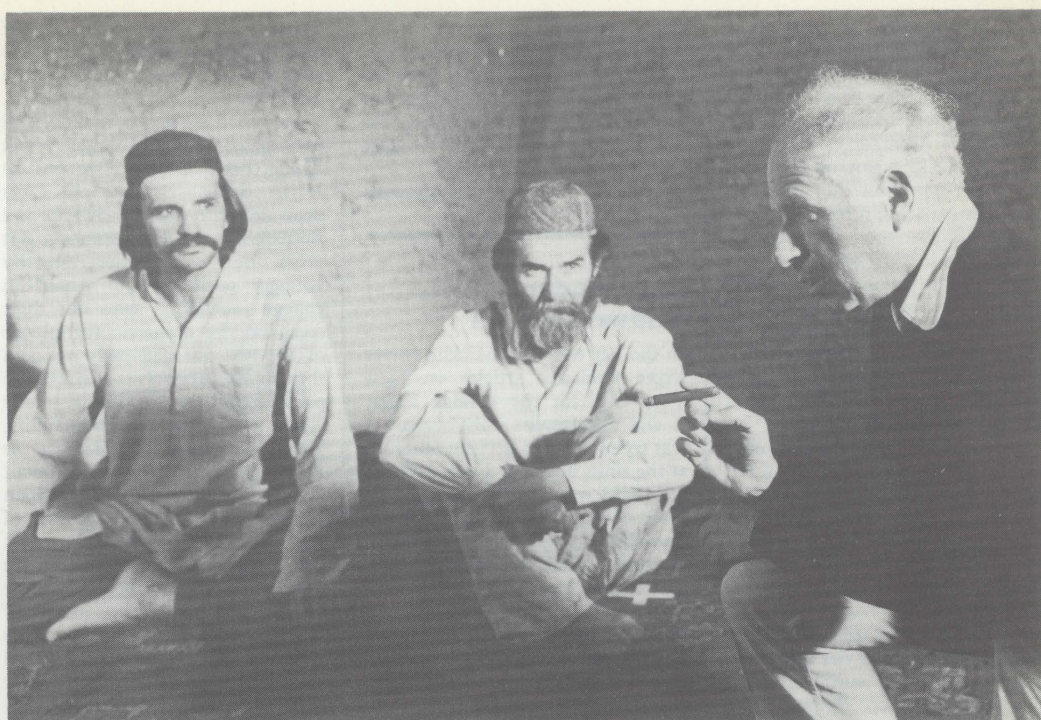
Howard Schuman's Little Ladies in 'Rock Follies'



trying to reproduce, not just the surface, but what's going on underneath. Reality equally lies in people's heads.' *Vérité* did the rounds of the BBC and the ITV companies, and was turned down by all. The then script editor of Thames' *Armchair Theatre* thought it 'a good idea but not for Fred Bloggs.' Eventually Thames did buy it. Schuman originally thought of *Vérité* as a stage play, though it easily became a TV work. It concerns an American underground film-maker who descends on a young English couple. Schuman was always bothered by the failure in TV plays to match the rhythms of studio videotape drama with film inserts, and derived some satisfaction from cutting from colour videotape on which the play is recorded to a black and white film (a 'work' by the film-maker) within the play. It's a favourite Schuman device. In *Captain Video's Story* (Thames, 1973) the play switches back and forth from a couple's own view of their marriage as captured by portable video, the tool of a fashionable psychotherapy technique. As Stanley, sci-fi freak in *Amazing Stories* (Granada, 1976), visualises his family turning into vegetables, the play cuts to a grotesquely funny parody of *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*.

Tantalisingly, Schuman's *Censored Scenes from King Kong*, produced by the BBC in 1974, remains unseen, although he is writing a stage version for an Open Space production in November. The play was originally written for 'The Eleventh Hour' late night slot, which was to present a series of low budget, quickly written and often topical dramas. The slot was axed during the imposition of shorter broadcasting hours during the three-day week. Schuman relates with relish that the Duck Sisters, played by Julie Covington (Dee, the mainstay of the Little Ladies) and Beth Porter (formidable manager in *Rock Follies* of '77), were singing 'The Lights Are Going Out All Over Europe', when someone walked into the studio and announced the three-day week. The play is ostensibly about a journalist who is haunted by a scene he believes was cut from the feature, where Kong, having kidnapped Fay Wray, makes love to her. It's punctuated by a blank screen, and a caption 'Scene Missing'. The overriding theme is paranoia, not only on a personal level but as a condition of society in general, and of Britain in particular, as the country drifts towards austerity. As an outsider, Schuman is interested in British and American contrasts. The apathetic family in *Amazing Stories* fancifully represents a Britain in decline.

In common with his theatrical contemporaries, Schuman uses the raw material of a comic-strip, pulp culture for serious, even political purposes. *Censored Scenes* is the play that bears most resemblance to *Rock Follies*, both in its themes (e.g., the exploitation of women by men) and in its techniques (the inclusion of music). Schuman had just read Thomas Pynchon's *Gra-*



'Meetings with Remarkable Men': Peter Brook with Dragan Maksimovic (Gurdjieff) and Athol Fugard

vity's *Rainbow* when he wrote *Censored Scenes*, and some of the novel's atmosphere carries over. 'There's no sense of final solutions . . . you never know where the power is.' In the first *Rock Follies* series it's possible to discern the radiating lines of power structures. Derek, the Little Ladies' manager, bows to the blue movie-maker, who in turn is brushed aside by entrepreneur Stavros Kuklas. Kuklas finally succumbs to a voice on the end of a phone—his mother. In the 1977 sequel 'the growing tensions and the paranoia in the Little Ladies are meant as images of society at large.' The closed decisions, part and parcel of the play-list system, by which records get air time, mirror the workings of the political system. The political parallels become more acute in the closing episodes, as they run up to the Jubilee celebrations. They're so far unshown, because the series was hit in mid-stride by a strike at Thames studios. They are now tentatively scheduled for transmission this autumn. Schuman contains his own paranoia and crosses his fingers.

PAUL MADDEN

Brook at Didcot

Peter Brook was once described as the best director the English theatre doesn't possess. British cinema has been even more deprived of his presence. In 25 years he has made just six feature films—and a little-known television affair called *Heaven and Earth* for Lew Grade of which, he confesses, he's rather fond. *Meetings with Remarkable Men*, shot this summer in Afghanistan and at Pinewood Studios, comes after a break of seven years. And, in view of the internationalist air which now surrounds him, it's somehow incongruous to find Peter Brook in a Didcot railway-yard—

directing the train-freaks of the Great Western Society with all the concentration once lavished on the Royal Shakespeare Company, now on his own Paris-based theatre troupe.

The train-freaks are unaware of their privileged position. 'Isn't this boring?' remarks one rhetorically, in a broad West country accent, after the fourth run-through. Brook's professional actors have been rather more grateful for the amount of time spent in rehearsal. Performers with just one line have been rehearsed for up to an hour, says the producer Stuart Lyons without a hint of impatience. With his leading actors, who include Terence Stamp and Colin Blakely, Brook has spent fifteen minutes in discussion before a scene, following up with seven rehearsals and as many takes.

The film is about a man who searches for inner truth. More specifically, it's about the early life of George Ivanovich Gurdjieff, the philosopher, writer and spiritual teacher and now, 28 years after his death in Paris, a minor cult figure. What the film isn't is a 'private vision'. 'In general today I think the greatest need and interest is for something that takes us outside people's private visions,' says Brook. 'We have had an enormous amount of trips into people's private visions. They're played out. It's exactly what's true of nudity. When you've seen one, you've seen them all.'

The way in which Brook has worked underlines his thesis. Constantly beside him on the set has been 82-year-old Madame Jeanne de Salzman, friend and collaborator of Gurdjieff. Mme de Salzman was co-author of the screenplay with Brook and, according to the credits, the film's co-director. The director of photography, Gil Taylor, has also played a creative role beyond that usually expected

of a cameraman. It's all part, says Brook, of breaking down the departmental process: 'Everything that's departmental is disastrous. A cameraman is a partner in telling a story through images. I've always been disappointed by the way he usually accepts being just the man who photographs the film.'

If you conclude from this that Brook rejects the auteur theory, you would be wrong. Film, he says, is far more the director's art than the theatre. 'I don't think the best theatre is a means of personal expression. The theatre is basically a communal event. The film is much more an individual vision of an individual statement. The French idea of the director as author is rooted in simple common sense. It's clear that this series of pictures in a fixed shape—so that nothing can change when the film is finished—does come from one source. Obviously, a committee isn't going to do so well. But even accepting the fact that a film is more focused, coming from the guidance of one creative source, it can still be more open. I think any person in the position of knowing that every decision he makes is a reflection of his own views has every reason to put himself in the position of being constantly challenged and influenced by all that's coming his way from all the creative sources around him.'

The patchiness of Brook's cinema career is made particularly ironic by the fact that he set out originally to become a film director. After Oxford (where he made a film of Sterne's *Sentimental Journey*), he went straight to Pinewood and did a fairly comprehensive round of the studios in many departments—cutting rooms, script department, assistant director—before going into the theatre. What drove him away was the realisation that it would take him from seven to fifteen years (the studio heads'

estimates varied) to become a director. What has tended to keep him away is the terrible truth that of the two media, theatre is still vastly the more accessible.

'When I wanted to direct, I went to see the Boultings. They were very nice, but they couldn't raise a finger to help me because it would still cost them £60,000. In the theatre, it was £60. From then onwards, I've found the ridiculous thing is that once you get in the position of being able to work in both media, you can get something going in the theatre at fifty times the speed. And the chances of it falling through are far less.'

Meetings with Remarkable Men took two years to set up. Its three million dollar budget was found by Brook through a New York law firm with no previous film investment experience. 'I've never gone along with commercial concessions. I did a play called *The Physicist* and remember hearing to my amazement that William Wyler wanted to make a film of it. It would have cost about one million dollars. The whole thing collapsed because he was persuaded by his agents and

can sit down and decide to do something and put it together very fast. But I'm always torn between the two media: it's something you can never resolve. Right now, I'd like nothing better than to start another film tomorrow.'

SUE SUMMERS

Independent Midwesterners

In the late 60s Joan Micklin Silver wrote freelance articles on New York City for the *Village Voice*. 'I was a journalist only because I was trying hard to get into films... at the time, however I was eager to feel that I was still alive as a writer. I did community pieces: the abortion clinic at Bellevue, the Harlem sanitation plant, the Egyptian addition to the Metropolitan Museum and how it encroached on Central Park.' Later she directed a half-hour documentary, *The Immigrant Experience* (her own family were Jewish immigrants from Russia), and then, in 1973, wrote and directed the feature *Hester Street*,

Barron's first screenplay centred on a real-estate scandal, and it was only in the second version that the sale of the *Mainline* was introduced.

Designed by Stuart Wurtzel and photographed by Kenneth Van Sickle, both of whom worked on *Hester Street*, *Between the Lines* deals not with the Woodwards and Bernsteins of the establishment press but that other, slightly younger generation of American college journalists who cut their teeth on the domestic turbulence of the late 60s and early 70s and then found themselves adrift in the post-Nixon years without ready causes on which to set their sights. 'Many of the actors in *Between the Lines* had themselves been student activists in the 60s,' says Joan Micklin Silver. 'The odd part of that generation is that they talk about the good old days but are themselves still only 27 or 28. There was an interesting piece in one of the Washington papers about this by a man who had, I think, worked on the *Real Paper* or the *Phoenix* [the Boston independent newspapers]; he said he had a box just like the one we show in the film (one reporter has a box of photographs which he periodically goes through to revive memories of past triumphs) and he too felt nostalgic about a picture of his first office.'

'It's odd because my college experience was that I couldn't wait to be out in order to start living. I was born in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1935—television didn't arrive until I was 13—and graduated from Sarah Lawrence in 1956. In the spring of that year I took a course called "Choral and Symphonic Analysis" which had three pianos and six students and you read through orchestral scores at the piano in all the clefs. It was very technical. One day the instructor came in and, instead of sitting down at the piano, began to tell us about Rosa Parks and why she would sit at the back of the bus. It was the year of the Montgomery bus boycott. The school became involved; there was the right side and the wrong side; we sent money down for bicycles and I can remember just a sense of exhilaration. I had such a brief taste of it, but I can imagine to have spent all your college years that way would have been tremendously exciting. I feel that the group in *Between the Lines* was caught in a period of disintegration. They cling together in an almost adolescent manner; I feel too, however, that after the final sale of the paper and a period of reflection, some of them will return to investigative reporting.'

Much of *Between the Lines* was improvised. 'We would tape rehearsals of a scene five different ways. Then Ray and I would stay up until two in the morning transcribing the tapes and composing a new scene based on these improvisations.' One of the movie's most successful comic scenes is the lecture by the *Mainline's* music critic to an informal class of incredulous college girls. This stream of plausible gibberish was based, according to Joan Silver, on a lecture that Barron delivered while a

doctoral student of philosophy. A lecture, Ray Silver commented, which hastened his departure from the University of Wisconsin.

For Midwest's new film, 'a maximum-security prison drama', the Silvers are to reverse rôles, Joan to produce and Ray to direct. It will be a new experience for both. The project has taken some time to prepare since it involved finding a governor willing to allow his prison to be used as a film set. Based on the book *On the Yard*, by a former long term inmate, Malcolm Braly, the film goes into production in the autumn. The crew will spend six or seven weeks in a Pennsylvania prison, a number of whose inmates will be used as players.

JOHN PYM

Going, going...

How much longer can anyone afford to introduce foreign language films of quality into Britain? Any independent distributor considering bringing in a subtitled colour feature today would be unwise to allow less than the following costs:

	£
To receive the first 35mm subtitled print including freight, duty	1,500
Censorship, press show, stills, posters	500
Advertising	1,000
	3,000
The same distributor would be equally unwise to count on any more than the following revenue:	
	£
From West End run	1,000
From subsequent screenings	1,500
	2,500

In other words, to acquire a film *without* paying any advance or guarantee and *without* buying more than the first 35mm print is to gamble that you won't lose more than £500. Television? The distributor's share of a sale to BBC is unlikely to net him more than £750, and the transmission will wipe out any bookings for the best part of a year. 16mm? Allow at least £1,000 outlay for prints, which you might recover over three years. And remember that if you have not actually bought the rights outright, you must return half of any profits you somehow make to the producer.

So who still bothers, and why? Jackpot hunters know that if they strike really lucky they can add another nought to those revenue figures, but they also know that without some sensation value or established name (both of which can also add a nought to costs) the chances are practically nil. Those in it for the money must soon pack it in. Those in it for love seem likely to be wiped out. Rising costs and falling audiences suggest that within two years, maybe only one, there could be virtually no more subtitled films imported into Britain.

DEREK HILL



Lindsay Crouse in Joan Micklin Silver's '*Between the Lines*'

friends that he couldn't, in his position, afford to make such a cheap film. He'd lost his freedom by making nothing but big important pictures. So I was always determined to keep my freedom. On *Lord of the Flies*, for instance, we had a horrendous year with Sam Spiegel and Columbia when they were going to produce. They couldn't get below a budget of over one million dollars, which was enormous for that story. In the end we raised the money privately, and having made it I was very determined never to raise my price. A few French directors work this way: which is to say you don't increase your status by making each film bigger.

'In this case, I recognised clearly that having no commercial reputation as a money-maker but only an artistic one, and having no stars and a subject which didn't fall into the currently popular categories—disaster or violence—you couldn't get the money from a normal source. So I had to spend two years raising the finance privately, with great difficulty. In the theatre, you

which was produced by her husband Ray and financed by Midwest, the independent production-distribution company they had set up in New York the year before.

The profits from *Hester Street*, a nostalgic, sharply observed tale of migrant life on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the 1890s, were enough to enable the Silvers to finance their next feature, *Between the Lines*, without resort to any outside investor. The film, which came high on a critical straw-poll after its European première at the Berlin Festival, was written by Fred Barron, who drew on his own journalistic experiences for its affectionate account of the inter-relationships of the youthful staff of the *Back Bay Mainline*, an independent weekly newspaper with a faded crusading spirit which is about to be bought by a distinctly right-wing conglomerate. The movie, which Joan Silver reports has done well in America, except in Boston where it was set, received a fortuitous boost by being released at the time of the controversial sale of the *Village Voice*.

Right: Henry Fonda as Eddie Taylor

George Wilson

YOU ONLY LIVE ONCE:

THE DOUBLED FEATURE



You Only Live Once is one of Fritz Lang's most widely admired American films and is thought to be among the finest of the 'social consciousness' films of the 1930s. The movie is praised for its technical excellence, its richness of visual texture and its generally moving depiction of the story's star-crossed lovers. These judgments are absolutely correct as far as they go; and yet, I believe, they do not begin to go far enough. In particular, *You Only Live Once* exhibits a kind of structural and stylistic complexity which carries it into areas of concern that the usual remarks fail entirely to reflect. To see how this is so, clearly and in detail, is a matter of some importance. The thematic concerns of the film and the methods by which they are expressed are of very considerable interest on their own. Moreover, understood in the context of the subtle framework that organises its significance, certain segments and aspects of the movie which have seemed flawed or worse appear in a new and more satisfactory light—the ending, for example, which is commonly thought to be a disastrously maudlin lapse.

Considered from a historical perspective, I know of no American film from the period, with the possible exception of von Sternberg's last two films with Dietrich, which exhibits the same consistently high level of cinematic complexity and sophistication. Indeed, if the very large claims that I make for *You Only Live Once* are right, then a reassessment of Lang's American work is called for. This is not a matter of reassessing Lang's stature in film. I take it that he is already secure among the great film-

makers. But we do need a serious reconsideration of the nature of his thematic materials and the strategies through which they are expressed in his work.

One of the most central of the pre-occupations that runs throughout the movie is stated quite explicitly, with unwitting irony, by Father Dolan, the prison priest. He says at one point, to the warden's sceptical wife, 'We all see through the same pair of eyes, but we don't all see the same thing.' And this is but a single



instance of such a reference in a movie which seems obsessed with the various facets of perception *and* blindness. Through the visuals and the dialogue we are repeatedly introduced to questions concerning sight and the failure to see, pictures and picturing and the various senses of the word 'vision'. Later, we will explore the way in which Father Dolan's weighty words seem to carry an ironic application to him and the role he seeks to play.

However, we do best to begin with the possibility that this remark about what people do or do not see applies, with equal irony, to us as members of the movie's audience. A striking and peculiar aspect of the film is the way in which it signals the possibility of manipulating our perception of its action. At several points, in several ways, the audience is led into making a mistake of perceptual judgment after which a wider context is revealed in terms of which the judgment is shown for the mistake it is. The basic pattern is exemplified within narrower and broader contexts, but two sequences initially stand out in that they are relatively isolated and well defined within the film and that they seem, at first impression, particularly gratuitous. The sequences are these:

A—In what turns out to be Eddie Taylor's boarding room, the scene opens with a tracking shot in medium close-up. This reveals a sequence of objects which the audience already identifies with Eddie: a picture of Joan and his fatal, initialled hat. As the camera completes the track, a person is discovered lying on a bed. Because of an overall physical resemblance to Eddie and through the associations with the objects, we think for just an instant that this person *is* Eddie. In fact, it is his criminal associate Monk. As we realise this, there is a cut to a medium shot of the whole room and we see that Eddie is also present, standing at the back of the room looking out of the window.

B—At the time of Eddie's trial, a scene opens with a close-up of a newspaper whose giant headlines announce that Eddie has been found innocent. Beneath the headlines is a picture of Eddie, warm and smiling. But next the camera slowly pans left, showing a second front page which proclaims that his jury is deadlocked and pictures him with a blank, neutral expression. This time, when we cut back to a broader perspective, we see that these are two of three press pages hanging on the wall of an editor's office. The third headline states that Eddie is guilty and the picture shows him scowling and dangerous. To the left of this front page is a horseshoe also hanging on the wall. The editor is waiting for the jury's verdict to come down. The phone rings, the editor listens and silently picks out the 'guilty' version with his pointer. Of course, we have first thought that Eddie has been released, but the scene as a whole corrects our quick impression.

Both these scenes involve specific patterns which we will explore shortly, but, more simply, they raise a type of question we should be prepared to pursue. A and B are rudimentary but classic illustrations of the potential unreliability of film. On the one hand, film can focus our attention on the patterns of visual significance that segments of the visible world embody. To many, this has seemed the central promise of film. On the other hand, in providing such a focus, a selection is necessarily made from a wider setting: a setting which may contradict the significance the narrower focus has implied. And this has seemed the central danger of film—its most characteristic way of lying. A and B stand like small flags to the danger and warn us to ask whether the same moral applies to the wider contexts of the movie.

A question that informs at least the whole middle section of the film is that of Eddie's

guilt or innocence. Did he or did he not rob the bank? Lang has gone to rather special pains to raise this as a question for the audience. During his final fruitless visit to the Ajax Trucking Co., Eddie is established as both frustrated and violent. He says explicitly that his old life of crime is all he can turn to. When the hold-up scene is presented, although we see the figure of the robber, we are carefully kept from telling whether or not it is Eddie Taylor. Of course, the fact that Eddie's hat is in the robber's possession heightens our suspicions. And these doubts do not even appear to be resolved until the beginning of the last third of the movie.

At this point, during the prison break, the mystery seems to be cleared up. The police have found the stolen armoured truck with Monk's drowned body slumped in the front seat. They conclude that Eddie is innocent and the audience, their sympathetic hopes finally substantiated, concludes the same thing. It may seem that by keeping the audience in the dark so long, Lang is simply playing for certain effects of suspense and irony; but this, I think, is incorrect. The point is to raise in the audience's minds, in a clear and definite way, the problem of what Eddie has done and who he really is. Moreover, it is just at the point where these questions seem to be answered that we are implicitly required to take them up again, more seriously and rigorously than before. We are asked to reconsider what it is that we have seen and what, from that, we know.

The issues here are complicated, and it is helpful to break them down into three categories. First, there is the logic of the evidence we have. The audience can play a game of detection with the facts it has been given. We find that (1) the evidence that purports to exculpate Eddie is radically insufficient and (2) there is incriminating evidence which is altogether bypassed in the explicit presentation.

We begin with a point of logic. The fact that Monk is found in the submerged truck can be presumed to show that he was involved in the crime. However, it does not show that Eddie was not *also* involved. Remember that the proposition Monk had made earlier to Eddie involved collaboration on a hold-up; thus it becomes a *prima facie* possibility that Eddie and Monk committed the robbery together. Nevertheless, this possibility can seem to be foreclosed by the fact that we have seen the robbery and saw only one person engaged in the crime. Here we are forced to examine the details of this crucial scene.

It opens with a crane shot which moves in on a pair of eyes surveying the situation before the bank, the eyes shifting nervously across the scene. In addition, and this is of special importance, the eyes are shown to be peering out of the rear window of a parked car. When we are later shown the inside of this car, everything is presented in a close-up of the action in the front seat. A suitcase is shown first, filled with the robber's apparatus. Next, a hand removes a gasmask from the case and replaces it with Eddie's hat. As the camera pans right, someone is shown behind the steering wheel but the face has been completely hidden by the gasmask. Throughout this extended shot, the camera is held so tightly on the

Eddie Taylor (Fonda) at the window; his partner Monk on the bed



action that it is impossible to make out what, if anything, is happening in the back of the car. The eyes we first saw looking from the rear window are not explained.

The suggestiveness of this shot is amplified by two later sequences each of which contain shots of restlessly shifting eyes. In both cases, the eyes are clearly seen to be Eddie's. During his prison interview with Joan, and during the first stage, in his cell, of his escape from prison, Eddie's eyes dart back and forth over a threatening situation in the same manner that we have seen before.

Returning to the robbery sequence, the person in the gasmask steps out of the car and bombards the street with grenades. Their explosion fills the area with almost impenetrable clouds of gas. We see the robber complete the hold-up under the cover of this gas, but it so cloaks the action and the sequence is so shot and edited that it is impossible to tell whether any other person is acting with the man we see.

The sequence that follows shows the getaway in the stolen armoured truck and it underlines the point that I've been making. We see the truck as it is driven furiously around a detour sign and down a small side road. But here the idea that we will follow the action is firmly checked. The camera remains fixed at the crossroads in the heavy rain as we hear the sound of the truck crashing into an unseen body of water. If Eddie was in the truck and has managed to escape, we have been forbidden to know.

I've mentioned the unexplained eyes in the hold-up car, but another incriminating suggestion is made by a different fact. The second scene of the film begins with a close-up of a suitcase which Joan is packing for Eddie, containing the things he will need in his life outside prison. To all appearances, this suitcase and the one holding the robber's gear are one and the same. The fact that Eddie's hat has been found at the scene of the crime figures significantly in the development of the plot. Much is made of this as evidence of his guilt although he offers his own explanation of why it was there. Within the story, nothing is said about the matter of the suitcase; but, for the audience, the two related close-ups of what seems to be the same object equally deserve and do not receive an explanation.

Thus, if the audience pursues the logic of the evidence, the later 'proof of innocence' is completely unsatisfactory. I am not suggesting that we know Eddie is really guilty, but rather that we simply are in no position to judge. The facts we are given are flatly and disturbingly ambiguous. In fact, Lang seems to make fun of the way in which people treat the question of evidence. After the robbery, Eddie shows Joan a newspaper picture of his hat with the initials exposed. The caption claims that if the owner of the hat is identified the murderer will have been found. It is plain here that the ridiculously circumstantial nature of this inference is being mocked. And yet, when Eddie is cleared, a ticker tape carries the message that since Monk has been found in the truck, Eddie must be innocent. We are very much more inclined to accept this inference, but we have just examined the way in which it is



The hold-up sequence: the robber wears a gasmask

as wilfully circumstantial as the first. 'Thus and so, therefore Eddie is guilty.' 'Thus and so, therefore Eddie is innocent.' In each case, these brusque pronouncements are intentionally laughable.

The second category of consideration concerns the suggestiveness of the imagery embedded in the robbery and getaway sequences. *You Only Live Once* is filled with references to the difficulty of seeing and of seeing clearly, and these two sequences are no exception. The hold-up and getaway are persistently obscured by violent rain; the eyes in the car are forced to search through a thick curtain of rain. These difficulties are multiplied enormously, both for characters in the film and for the audience, when the scene is choked by the heavy layer of poison gas. In a similar vein, just before the robbery begins we see people in the immediate vicinity of the bank, including guards and passers-by. But the only person who is in a position to see the whole development of the robbery is a blind beggar selling pencils beside the bank's main doors. Such imagery evokes the idea that it will be difficult, if not impossible, to perceive what will happen.

The third and final category of evidence involves the relation between this whole question of Eddie's possible guilt and the two instances of explicit perceptual manipulation, sequences A and B, discussed above. In sequence A, the pattern of perceptual mistake and recognition has the following form. The audience (a_1) mistakes Monk for Eddie; and then (b_1) recognises that this person is Monk; and finally (c_1) sees that Eddie is also present, at the back and looking out of the window. Within the larger movement of the events connected with the robbery there exists the definite possibility that exactly this pattern is recapitulated: (a_2) at the time of the hold-up, we are inclined to think that the robber is Eddie; (b_2) when the 'proof' is discovered we realise that the robber is Monk after all. But I have been arguing at considerable length that the evidence of the film, taken as a whole, permits the possible inference that (c_2) both Monk and Eddie are present at the crime, with Eddie again at the back (of the car) and looking out of the window. The film is perfectly balanced between the standard reading and the inference to c_2 . With this perfect, ambiguous balance, it has the beauty of a steel trap.

The implications of sequence B should by now be fairly clear. We first see the news-

paper that shows us what we want to see: the smiling Eddie is innocent. A moment later, society within the film delivers its judgment: the scowling Eddie is guilty. The right answer, however, is given by the front page in the middle, the page we tend to overlook. The jury ought to be deadlocked. Neither the film's jury nor the 'jury' in the audience is in a position to render a verdict on Eddie Taylor's essential guilt or innocence. Each group does make a judgment and both are wrong to do so. They are wrong in opposite ways and both are wrong equally. The horseshoe at the end of the row of papers marks a conclusion that the movie amply justifies. It is merely a matter of luck as to which of the possible verdicts will be reached.

I have spoken several times of the fact that the audience desires and half expects that Eddie will be innocent. In this connection, it is important that the movie works so smoothly and so well within the conventions of a 30s 'social consciousness' film. A depression audience, especially, was prepared to believe that a sympathetic proletarian boy like Eddie would be unjustly crushed by the implacable social machine. The honest openness that a young Henry Fonda could so easily convey reinforces the impression. If we are emotionally involved with the plight of the two attractive lovers trying to find a safe, comfortable place together, we care even more that he should not be irremediably a criminal. Both Fonda and Sylvia Sydney, in view of their earlier roles, were particularly well suited to invoke the appropriate responses. Lang has carefully calculated that his audience's predictable concerns and expectations, encouraged by the familiar narrative apparatus, will see the story of Eddie and Joan with a warm concern. Secure in our condemnation of the prejudice and false perspective of society within the film, the film itself employs a gamut of cinematic devices to guide us down the path of our own prejudices and false perspectives. At this point, the perfect steel trap has been closed on its viewer. If we recall that, a few years earlier, Fritz Lang had fled the Nazi regime after having been offered control of the German studios, it is hardly surprising that he should have been thinking deeply about the power of the movies to shape and control the factors in terms of which we see the world. *You Only Live Once* translates such reflection into a distinctively American idiom and style.

We have already touched upon the fact that the movie draws a direct connection between the way that people are seen and the way in which they are pictured. Sequence B played with this point in a grimly funny way. Most obviously, there are sections where the plot development turns on this connection. Eddie is recognised as an ex-convict by the owner of the inn where the couple spend their honeymoon because he has seen Eddie's picture in an old crime magazine. Later, Joan's identification by the manager of a motel brings about their capture. Squinting through his spectacles, he recognises her from her picture on a wanted poster hanging on his wall. He compares the picture with Joan herself, who stands, as though in another picture, framed by the crossbars of



Eddie on the courthouse steps; newsreel camera in the middle of the crowd

his apartment window. At other points, the issue is dealt with in subtler ways. When Eddie is released from prison, the sequence opens with a close-up of his face set in a blank, impassive expression. The warden mechanically delivers his customary farewell speech, and in the course of doing so says, as he looks down at Eddie's prison photos, 'This is the third time that you have appeared on my desk.' But it is not Eddie but his pictures which have appeared three times on his desk. Our perception of other human beings may be dangerously reduced to a mode of picturing them. The culmination of this process occurs in a famous shot at the end of the movie. Trapped by the police, Joan and Eddie are reduced to two faceless forms framed within the sight of a state trooper's rifle.

It is a simple transition from questions about the pictures in the film to the same questions about the pictures that constitute the film we are watching. We have seen how well these questions apply. Nevertheless, Lang introduces a scene in which this connection is broached, quietly and effectively. When Eddie is being removed for the last time to the penitentiary, there occurs an unusual sequence outside the courthouse. It opens on a high-level long shot that shows Eddie being led down the courthouse steps and confronted by an angry mob. In the middle of the crowd is a newsreel camera filming his departure. This is followed by a ground level shot which reveals the fury of the crowd and, during this shot, the newsreel camera begins a pan. The panning is completed exactly at the spot where the lens of the camera faces directly into Lang's camera shooting the scene. Immediately, there is a cut to a close-up of Eddie's face. 'Take a good look,' he yells, 'What do you expect to see?' The connection established between the camera identified with the crowd's point of view and the camera identified with ours indicates that Eddie's challenge is thrown out as much to us as to the people in the scene.

A related device is employed in the strange episode in which Eddie and Joan meet in prison after his conviction. They are separated during their interview by a heavy iron door, and able to see one another only through a small window in the door. As they begin to talk, Lang crosscuts between their faces, each seen from the other's point of view through the window.

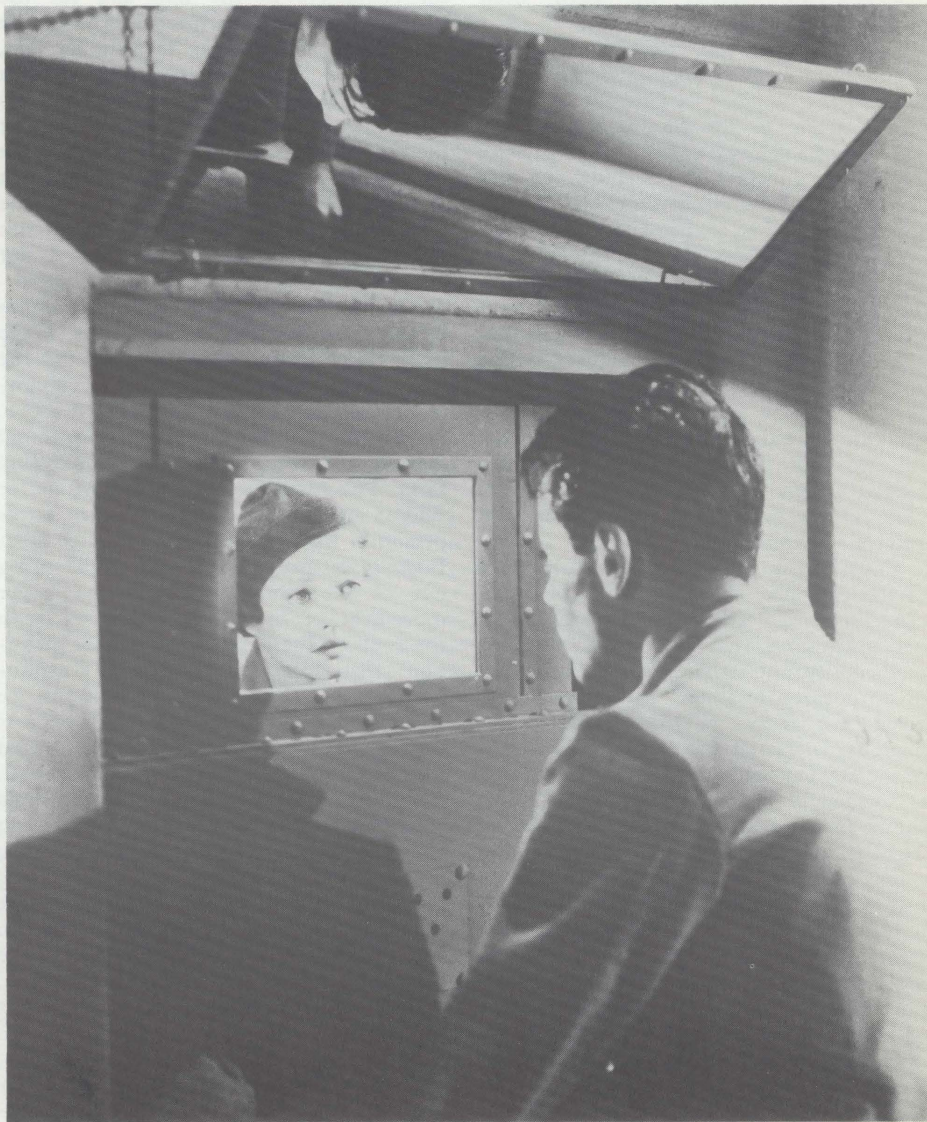
Consequently, each face is framed within the screen frame by the rectangular borders of the window. The characters are backlit in a soft, luminescent manner so that they appear to each other and to the audience like glowing figures in a Hollywood close-up. This, I believe, is the intended effect. We are given a sequence which consists of shots representing, as it were, other shots: namely, close-ups focused on the faces of the stars. At this point in their relationship, Joan and Eddie are almost completely estranged from one another. Seeing one another here, their emotional distance is so great that they fail, in any deeper sense, to see each other at all. And this estrangement, this sense of their strangeness to each other, communicates itself to us. Classical film theory has held that a close-up of the human face is the paradigmatic way in which a subject's inner life may be cinematically exposed. But this series of metaphorical close-ups works on us in just the opposite way. Eddie's face is harsh, angry, withdrawn and inscrutable. Joan's face is tearful, pleading, nearly hysterical and, in its own way, inscrutable. There is a crucial ambiguity about how Joan is to be understood, and this is perfectly rendered by the wild and pathetic countenance she presents in this scene. In conjuring up this film image of the film image itself, Lang warns the

audience again that it may reveal much less than it appears to do.

Up to this point, I have mostly concentrated on the central strategy of the movie, the central ambiguity on which it turns. However, much of the emotional core resides in the way in which this ambiguity ramifies across the rest of the film. In particular, each of the three central characters appears as strangely doubled; psychological duck-rabbits in the trap the movie springs. Eddie, Joan and Father Dolan can each be seen in two very different ways.

The trouble with Eddie should now be obvious. On the one hand, he may be the essentially innocent victim of fate and injustice that he predominantly appears to be. On the other, however, he may be a weak, desperate and lying criminal who will blatantly use the woman he loves when he is cornered in dangerous circumstances. I don't believe we are meant to doubt that, in some way, Eddie does love Joan. What is in question is the character and importance of that love. If Eddie committed the robbery and massacre, then he lies to Joan and trusts her, as he trusted her before, to extricate him from the situation he has created. It is definitely established that a similar pattern of events has transpired before. Before his third conviction, Eddie and Joan had planned to marry, and then

Prison meeting between Joan (Sylvia Sydney) and Eddie: '... glowing figures in a Hollywood close-up'



he had robbed a bank with his gang. It is through Joan's intervention that he is released, after only three years, from the sentence he was serving for this job. For all we know, the situation, although even more grave, may be the same again this time.

In sequence B, we noted the motif of Eddie's three faces. Throughout the film, each of these faces intermittently appears. For example, his first appearance is given in a close-up of the 'neutral' Eddie; then, when he is with Joan, the 'nice' Eddie emerges. So much so, in fact, that we are put off balance by the coldness and viciousness with which the formerly 'nice' Eddie turns on Joan after his conviction. This face, the face of a 'dangerous' Eddie, is not to be dismissed. In the end, the 'real' Eddie Taylor still lies beyond our grasp.

Joan's case is more complicated and certain additional patterns need to be established. The most obvious understanding of her is that she is the loving, loyal and devoted wife who commits herself completely to the emotional bond with her husband. The devotion she displays is certainly complete, but there is also the clearcut suggestion that there may be something blind, something a little insane, about the extremes of her commitment.

Joan is one of the two characters who 'sees goodness' in Eddie, and on the basis of this puts her faith in him. However, this may tell us more about her than it does about Eddie. In the movie's opening scene, she walks in on the D.A. and the public defender discussing the forthcoming case of a woman apparently faced with a serious charge. Joan announces to them that the woman is innocent. 'I believe her story,' she declares, although there is no reason to suppose that she has the slightest grounds for her belief. Indeed, her version of the criminal justice system is that the D.A. should put people in prison merely in order for the public defender to get them out again—presumably, just as he has arranged for Eddie's freedom.

This happy faith in Eddie and in the machinery of ideal justice is reflected when Eddie turns to her for help after the robbery. In the first place, there is a hint of 'blind' faith in the way she similarly believes his story. Eddie provides her with only the flimsiest explanation for his dilemma and then demands from her a declaration of belief which she immediately and fully supplies, despite the fact that it seems to be a repetition of what had happened to them three years before. Second, her belief in how the legal system ought to work comes into play. When Eddie first arrives, he wants the keys to her car so that he can make an escape. But she tells him that he is 'looking at things all wrong'. She wants him to turn himself in so that his innocence can be established. She stresses that in asking this of him she is asking him to believe in her and in her way of looking at things. Of course, her way of looking at things involves a dire misperception and Eddie is convicted and sentenced to death.

There is a repeated suggestion in the dialogue that we really don't understand what is going on inside Joan and even that



'Joan and Eddie see the frogs at their honeymoon inn'

there is something a little crazy about her. The D.A. asks the public defender what it is that Joan thinks she *sees* in Eddie and no reply is forthcoming. A little later, the public defender asks Father Dolan what it is that she *feels* for Eddie, and again the question is not really answered. Joan's sister tells her that she is 'crazy', crazy in particular to believe in Eddie. Joan responds cheerfully that she is 'wacky' and what is more she 'loves being wacky'. When Eddie is released from prison, she tells him that he is looking at her 'as if she were a maniac'. And later they discuss her love for him as a matter of her being 'all mixed up'. Another character speaks of her having 'lost her senses', and so on. The immediate context of these remarks is often light, but the deeper concerns of the film render them more serious.

The famous scene in which Joan and Eddie see the frogs at their honeymoon inn is relevant to these issues. As they descend the stairs to a lovely, artificial pond, they spot a pair of frogs in the water. Eddie describes what is liable to happen to frogs in the real world: they have their legs torn off by prankish little boys. Joan, however, quickly leads the conversation to a more suitable point of view as they conceive the frogs as if they were a young couple in love. Settling next to the pond, their images reflected upside down in the water, Joan suggests that maybe the frogs 'see something in each other that no one else can see.' Eddie tells her of a story that if one frog loses its mate it also will die. And this, for Joan, is 'just like Romeo and Juliet.' This tender anthropomorphism is, however, contradicted by an intercut close-up of the frogs looking as blank and inscrutable as—frogs. One frog leaps into the water, breaking this part of the human reverie, and Joan and Eddie turn back to each other and the matter of *their* love. Finally, as the soundtrack swells romantically, Eddie carries Joan back up the stairs to their room, but just for a moment we cut back to the frogs, together again on the lily pad, looking after their erstwhile companions. The background music shifts to a cold, unearthly strain and it is clear that what the frogs see in Joan and Eddie is not to be known.

This scene figures in an important way later on. When Eddie is scheduled to die, it emerges that Joan has taken his story with grim earnestness. She asks Father Dolan to tell Eddie that she 'remembers about the frogs' and this is her sign that she plans to act out the story by committing suicide herself. In fact, we see her preparing to take poison at the supposed moment of Eddie's execution and she is saved only by his last-minute escape. There is a continued hysterical note to Sylvia Sidney's performance throughout that sustains the question about her sanity, and, in this scene especially, the note is sounded with force and clarity.*

The examples already cited indicate the fact that at the foundation of all Joan's beliefs and motivation is a dominating vision of romantic love and marriage. The way she sees Eddie Taylor seems founded on the role that he is supposed to play within that vision. When they are married, she builds a little shrine of flowers around the marriage certificate. Everything connected with her love and marriage seems transmogrified by her vision. When they inspect a modest house that they are thinking of buying, she enthuses that 'it is the best house she has ever seen'; later her baby 'is the best baby that ever lived.' After she and Eddie have decided to take the house, we see her making out a budget for their future. At each item, she raises her eyes and fixes them blissfully into space as though her vision was already enveloped in the future she expects.

The audience that would see Eddie through her sympathetic eyes has reason to beware. She can be read as a character whose perception of the world is clouded by a larger vision which she will cling to at any cost. In fact she does cling to it, paying every cost, until, quite literally, the end. Just before she dies in Eddie's arms, she opens her eyes, looks into his and says, 'I'd do it *all* over again, darling.' The sentiment is conventionally romantic, but in the total setting of the film it has an unconventional ring, both pathetic and a little sinister.

Father Dolan is the other central character who sees redeeming virtue in Eddie, and I opened this discussion by quoting his remark, 'We all see with the same pair of eyes, but we don't all see the same thing.' I suggested that this might apply ironically to him; and, indeed, within the film's strategy of ambiguity he is also a 'doubled' character. The 'straight' significance of the benevolent prison priest hardly needs to be detailed, but signposts that point to a different kind of significance do.

Immediately after the line just quoted, Father Dolan goes on to develop his Christian philosophy of life and death. We are all born, he says, with 'the birthright of kings', but some have lost their birthright through the corrupting influence of a corrupt world. He suggests this may be the true meaning of death: death is a rebirth and provides a second chance to claim the lost birthright. Presumably this is a statement of how he sees the world through *his* pair of eyes. It has the consequence, as

* This note may be literally sounded within the film when Joan accidentally strikes a jarring chord as she rises from her seat before a piano to prepare for the suicide she plans.

Eddie has noted much earlier, that Father Dolan 'sees some good' not just in him, but in everyone. But how are we meant to assess the validity of this view?

As one takes stock of the priest's appearances in the film, it is noticeable that he has a persistent penchant for getting things wrong or, at best, half right. When we first meet him he is umpiring a prison baseball game and makes a call as one of the players slides home. It seems, in fact, to be a bad call, or so the prisoners think as they subject him to vociferous booing.* Father Dolan then leaves his umpiring to escort Eddie in his departure from the penitentiary. As they walk together he makes another call: he tells Eddie that he is a good man and predicts his success beyond the prison walls. When, at the end of this scene, the public defender asks him what Joan feels for Eddie—love or pity?—the priest gives the sanguine reply that it is more than pity. No doubt he is right about this, but by implying that it is a simple matter of love, he misses the key issues about Joan's feelings that we have just discussed and which the public defender surely means to raise.

Father Dolan reappears in the movie when Eddie reappears in prison: Eddie persuades Joan to smuggle in a gun and Father Dolan accompanies her as she attempts to bring it in. He tells her that when she sees Eddie for this final time, she will have to behave like 'a good soldier'. Unaware that she is packing a pistol in to her husband, he doesn't realise that she couldn't be a better 'soldier' than she is already. The concealed gun trips a metal detector and at this point the priest grasps the real situation; to protect Joan he tells the guards that the warning has been triggered by a penknife he carries, and then leads her to his office and takes away the gun. Joan asks him if he will look after Eddie and he responds, 'Yes, I will be with him to the end.' This claim is also true; but unfortunately he cannot know that it is his end, not Eddie's, to which his words will properly refer.

Still later, after he has delivered his homily about the goodness of man, the prison alarms signals Eddie's attempted escape. He goes with the warden to the scene of confrontation and, as they grapple with the danger, the news of Eddie's pardon arrives. It is Father Dolan who offers to take the pardon down to Eddie and to convince him to give up his hostage. He argues that it is only he that Eddie will be willing to trust. As he makes his way through a dense night fog that obscures both Eddie's sight and his, Eddie, mistrustful and panicky, shoots him through the heart.

This episode is followed by one that contains a curious commentary on his death. After the escape, Eddie arrives at a diner from which he will telephone Joan. Before he enters, however, we see a row of derelicts sitting at the counter discussing the recent events at the prison. The comments of the first two men merely establish

that this is the topic of conversation. Out of the blue, the third man announces, 'I knew a man once who shot his own dog right through the heart.' The fourth person asks what this has to do with the murder of the priest and the third man replies, 'Oh, I don't know. It just came to mind.' What he has done, of course, for the audience at least, is to hint at the alternative view of Father Dolan. His all-embracing, good-hearted faith in Eddie Taylor is placed on a par with the dumb, trusting belief of a dog for his master. The reward for such pure, unreflective trust has been a bullet in the heart. Just as Joan can be seen as significantly blinded by her romantic vision, so also Father Dolan may be similarly blinded by the Christian vision that guides his life.

It is this same religious vision that literally appears to Eddie in the moment before he dies. Joan has already died of a gunshot wound and, as he holds her corpse in his arms, Eddie too is fatally wounded. Before his eyes, the light in the forest miraculously brightens and he hears Father Dolan's voice calling his name. 'You're free, Eddie,' the voice calls out. 'You're free. The gates are open.' This seems to be a sign of the rebirth that the priest had spoken of before. The last shot of the film is from Eddie's point of view and it represents the last sight Eddie has. Heavenly rays of light break through the tangle of trees and illuminate the muddy slope in front of him. An angelic choir reaches the heights of beatific exaltation. It is this conclusion that so many critics have felt constitutes a saccharine betrayal of the whole tone of the film. This judgment, however, is a failure to discern the development of those themes that we have traced throughout this essay.

We have every reason to suppose that Eddie's dying vision may be only the ultimate misperception that culminates the chain of misperceptions which have led him to his death. It has been stressed again and again how much of the narrative development depends upon various failures of perception; how characters may appear deceptively to each other and to us. There is a compelling logic to the possibility that we are seeing in the end the last hope, the last pitiful illusion of a dying and defeated man.

In the sequences which immediately precede the conclusion, we are quietly prepared for precisely this possibility. As Joan and Eddie flee across the countryside, Eddie confesses that he is haunted by a vision of Father Dolan, that he always sees

Father Dolan (William Gargan), with Eddie and hostage



the priest's face before him. Thus the question of this particular illusion has already been planted. What is more, it is partly a fatal misperception that leads the couple into the police trap in which they are gunned down. While they are driving what ought to be the last stretch before the Canadian border and freedom, Joan notices with apprehension something that glistens in the woods ahead. We subsequently infer that what she has seen is a reflection, in the dawn light, from the waiting police cars. But Eddie reassures her, saying that the light is only the Morning Star, and she accepts the claim. The Morning Star aptly symbolises the new hope they are feeling as they draw nearer to Canada. The hope, however, is itself an illusion. Their death is what the distant light reflects. This pattern, then, cannot be ignored when Eddie's 'vision' is considered. Like the film as a whole, it is strictly ambiguous. The vision may be genuine or it may be horribly false, but we surely cannot accept without question a heavenly promise of life after death in a film whose title is, after all, *You Only Live Once*.

This discussion, I hope, cuts close to the central core of the film, the issue of the fundamental ways in which we fail to perceive the underlying significance of what we see. *You Only Live Once* is structured by an interlocking network of characters and events which express, with significant variations, the nature of this failure and its human consequences. Most striking, perhaps, is the way in which the audience is deeply implicated in these concerns. The movie explores with elaborate care the ways in which film may complicate and enhance our difficulties in seeing the world accurately by leading perception astray with methods of its own. Although I have pointed out the strategy by means of which the movie raises these matters, I have not developed here the important issues in the aesthetics of film which are, in this context, implied.*

In fact, there are a number of further topics that deserve much closer analysis than I have been able to provide. For example, the movie systematically depicts a hierarchy of human relationships: the relationships of love, marriage and family; the relationship of a person to important sub-groups within society and his or her relationship to the social order and to the state. And all these relationships are portrayed as being perpetually threatened by the failure of people within these actual or potential ties to see and understand the others in a full and satisfactory way. Lang's vision here seems to be one of despair. The sighted blind will find themselves a human situation only by chance if, indeed, they find themselves a place at all. These questions are barely adumbrated in the present essay, but I hope that I have said enough to show how they might be critically approached. I hope, especially, to have shown that *You Only Live Once* has a kind of complexity and a kind of greatness that we may, not surprisingly, fail to see. ■

*Among the crowd are two prisoners who are playing draughts surrounded by their own small audience. When this group turns its attention to Father Dolan's faulty umpiring, one of the players, unnoticed by the rest, makes a cheating move. We have another lesson in audience attention.

*I have discussed some of these issues at greater length and in a more theoretical context in 'Film, Perception and Point of View', *MLN*, Vol. 91, No. 5 (October, 1976).

SYBERBERG and the Tempter of Democracy

John
Pym



Syberberg with the glass ball containing the model of Edison's Black Maria

'I don't feel any justification is required for making a Hitler film. It is the subject of our century, and not merely for us Germans. I regard Hitler as the great tempter of democracy; and, as long as democracy exists, the subject of Hitler will be of immediate concern . . . Today, thirty years after the fact, the vision of what haunted us for twelve years impresses the younger generation as something fluorescent, something that comes and goes as fleetingly as a nightmare . . .'—HANS JÜRGEN SYBERBERG, in a television interview.

Angered by the West German critics' reception of his recent film book and their apparent boycotting of the Cannes screenings of extracts from his new six-hour film on the life and times of Adolf Hitler,* the director Hans Jürgen Syberberg cancelled a screening of further extracts planned for the Berlin Festival and, in a 16-page open letter to the press, denounced the critics and announced his departure from the German film scene. 'I have nothing more in common with these people. Why should I, and what use or pleasure is it to anyone? We are living in a dead country.'

Accusing 'the united German critics' of 'squatting like hyenas round the Hotel Majestic bar' in Cannes instead of doing their job, and of abusing his film without having seen it, Syberberg goes on to assert that a society is its culture—and gets the

culture it deserves—and that a society [West Germany] without freedom of thought or receptivity to new ideas is doomed. Syberberg's outburst is, clearly, a controversial one—especially in view of the exceptional number and variety of new German films at the Berlin Festival. And despite it, he will continue to make films in Germany. Nevertheless, one unarguable fact emerges from this domestic quarrel: the continuing influence of Hitler remains a dangerously combustible subject for a German filmmaker.

Syberberg's Hitler film, which at the time of writing is without an overall title, is divided into four separate parts: these are *Hitler—a Film from Germany*; *Thinking of Germany*, the first line of a poem by Heine; *In the Night*; and *Apocalypse or The End of Europe*. Shot in four weeks at the Bavaria Studios, Munich, on the slim budget of one million DM (£250,000), the film was in part financed by both West German television and the West German government. Syberberg declares, however, that 'the German critics and distributors have openly displayed a lack of interest in the German film-going public' and he seems to see little prospect of the film opening in his home country. Its other co-producers are the BBC and the French Institut National de l'Audiovisuel; and it seems probable that the film will be first seen in subtitled versions in France and Britain this autumn.

The film, which has been some five years in the planning and realisation, is for Syberberg the climax of an extended project tracing the life, works and influence of the four men he sees as having cast a decisive

and irreversible spell over the history and culture of modern Germany: King Ludwig II of Bavaria, the prolific popular novelist Karl May, the composer Richard Wagner and the dictator Adolf Hitler. The manner in which these men influenced each other, their love of Germany, their nostalgia for a mythical lost paradise, have united—in their very different ways—*Ludwig—Requiem for a Virgin King* (1972), *Karl May* (1974) and *The Confessions of Winifred Wagner* (1975). The Hitler film—the longest of the four—recreates the world of the Third Reich through slides projected from beneath the camera and reflected by a mirror into its lens. The players perform before a large screen twenty-seven feet high and thirty-six feet wide; depth is suggested by placing pieces of décor in front of the screen and by building stairs, terraces and platforms as extensions of its base. Written and designed by Syberberg (with some help from architectural drawings supplied by Albert Speer), the film ends with an Oktoberfest based on Hitler's grandiose victory celebration planned for 1950. ('It will be the Apocalypse, like a piece of hell. We'll have the music of the time and also Wagner, but it will not be done in the style of Leni Riefenstahl—that would be too expensive and like a Hollywood film.')

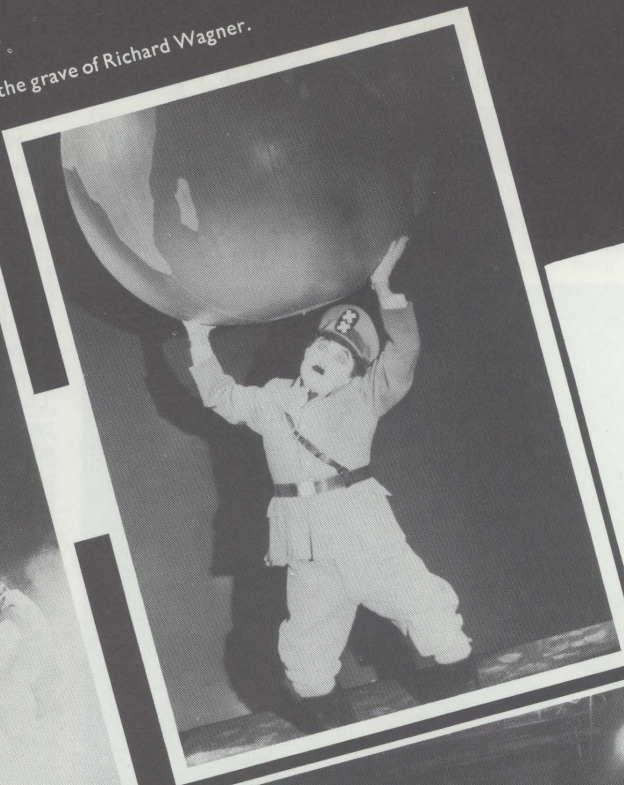
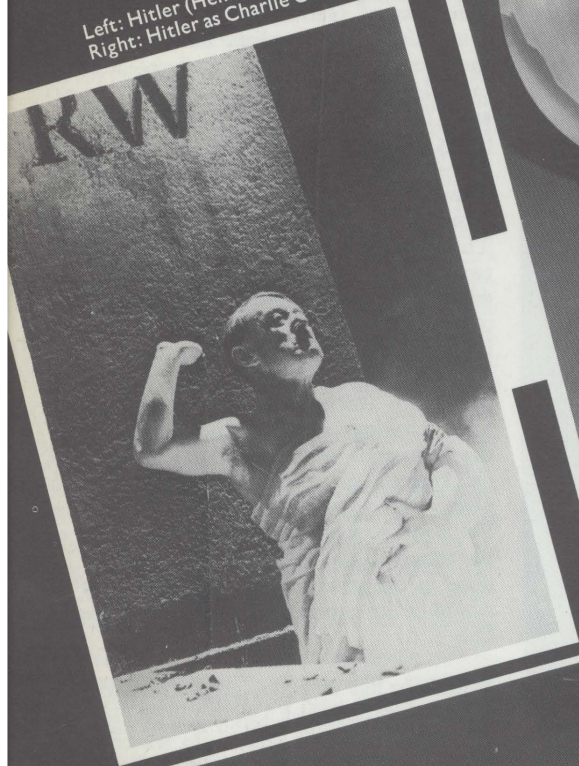
Syberberg has detailed some of his reasons for making the Hitler film in a West German television interview: 'How do we come to terms with Hitler, and how do we make a show of it all? We are not pointing an accusing finger, saying it was all Hitler's fault, and the rest of us can retire behind the cloak of his shame. No, forgiving Hitler, exculpating him, is the job of mourners. Which is not another way of saying we should speak well of him, claim he didn't do it, it wasn't he. We should, however, reduce his disgrace a little and spread the guilt around, the collective guilt that nobody wanted to assume after that war. This guilt also rests on the shoulders of the succeeding generation, on our own shoulders in fact. As I look around our world, I can see that we are still in love with the kind of thing Hitler once propagated. It starts with Wagner. Recently somebody who had heard about the film's proposed title *Hitler in Us*, said to me "not in me!"

'If I had said the Wagner in him, he might have accepted it, but there is no getting away from the fact that all the things we love are somehow tied up with Hitler. He used Goethe in the same way as he used Wagner—certainly he had more justification in using Wagner, who was a lot closer to him. That is the genius of Wagner, and it also brings us to a sensitive spot on which I intend to hammer frequently. This is the fact that all those things we consider right and meaningful are things Herr Hitler had already touched before we did. He is in fact the master of many things we have come to take for granted as a part of our mutual heritage. There is more to it than just the autobahn—how about the Berlin wall, the extension of which cuts right through Germany, equipped with concentration camp accoutrements like splinter grenades. He would have delighted in that. In my film he does—he sees how well we have learned his lessons from Germany straight to China . . .'

The following interview was conducted in

*See SIGHT AND SOUND, Summer 1977, p. 148.

Left: Hitler (Heinz Schubert) rising from the grave of Richard Wagner.
 Right: Hitler as Charlie Chaplin



A Film from



Koberwitz (André Heller) speaking about the myths of the Grail; in the background the Black Maria and Griffith's megaphone; foreground, Hitler puppet and (left) Richard Wagner's coat

One of the three reconstructed Black Marias, here in front of a landscape by Philip Otto Runge

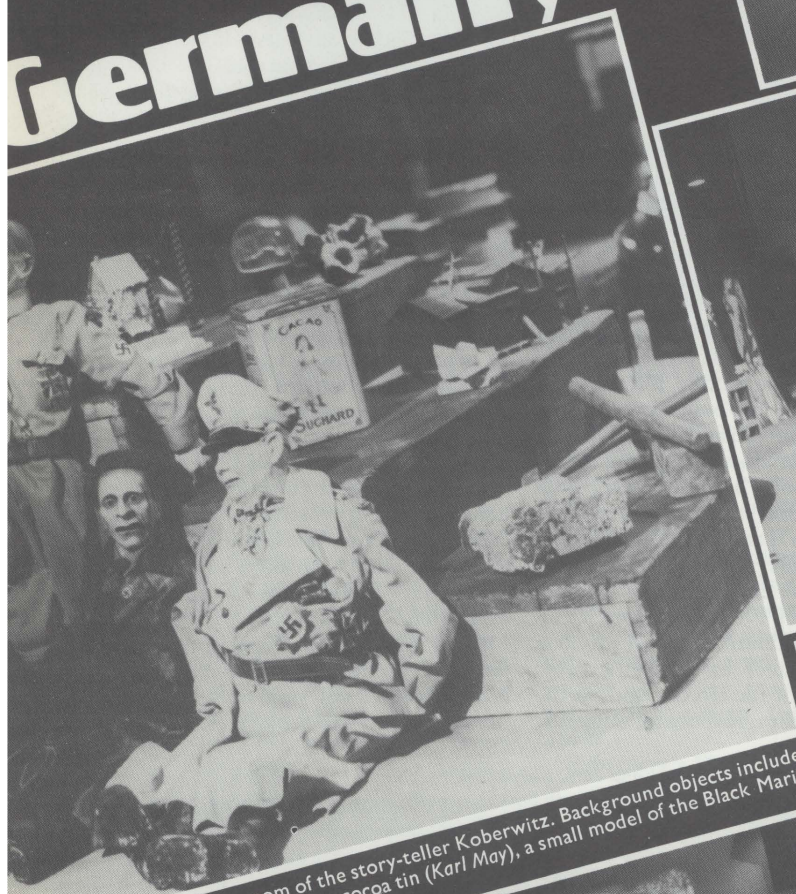
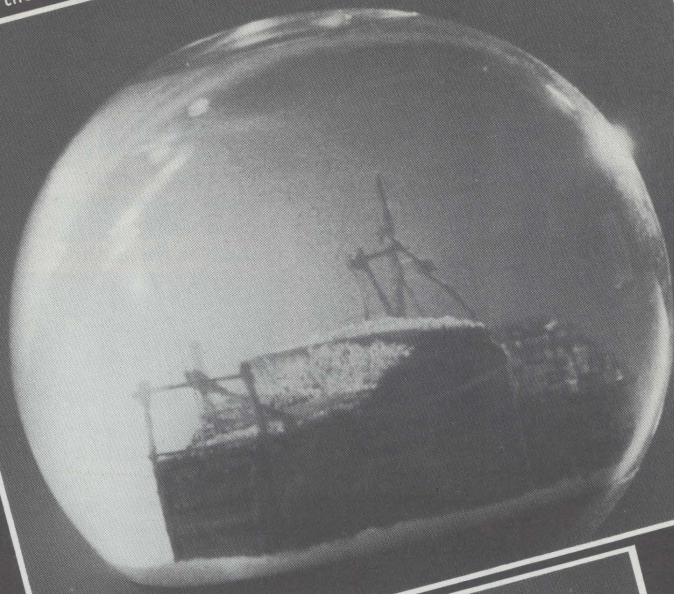


Puppets of Hitler, G... a stone from the ru...

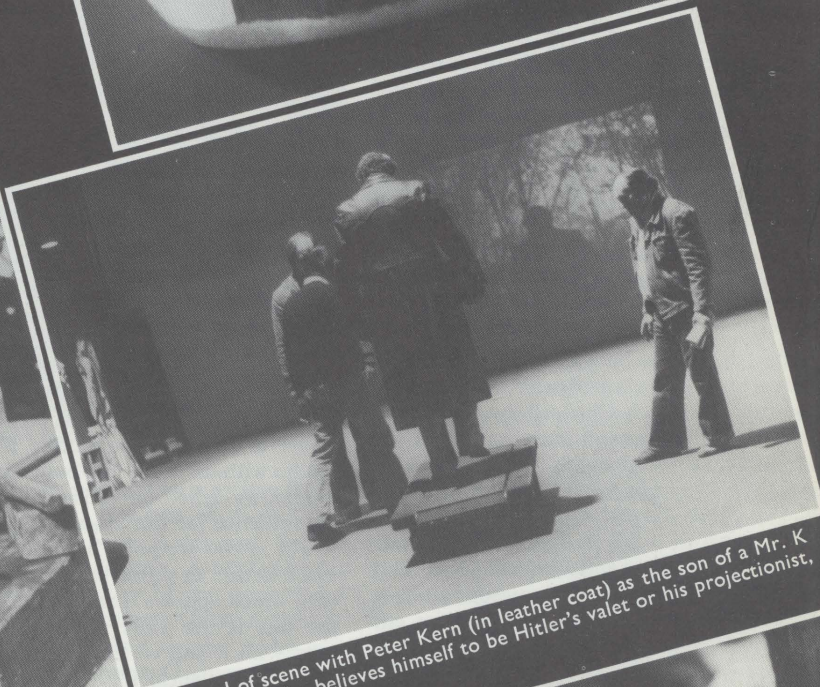
LEER

Germany

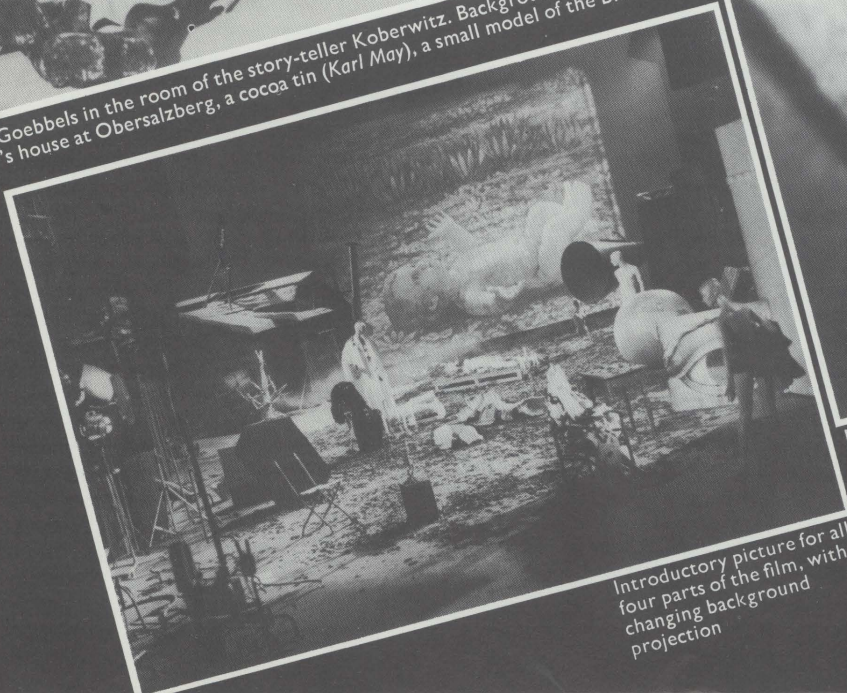
Edison's Black Maria
as a model of the cinema



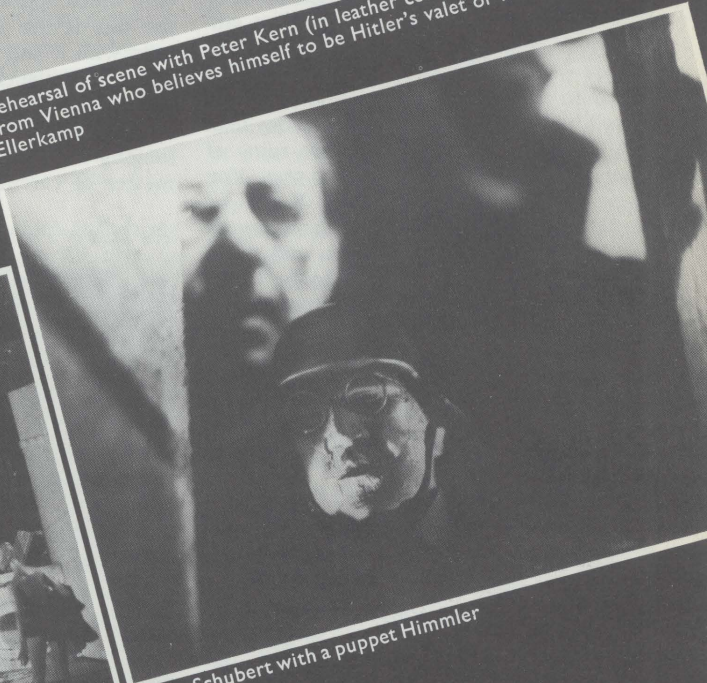
bering and Goebbels in the room of the story-teller Koberwitz. Background objects include
ns of Hitler's house at Obersalzberg, a cocoa tin (Karl May), a small model of the Black Maria



Rehearsal of scene with Peter Kern (in leather coat) as the son of a Mr. K
from Vienna who believes himself to be Hitler's valet or his projectionist,
Ellerkamp



Introductory picture for all
four parts of the film, with
changing background
projection



Heinz Schubert with a puppet Himmler

English at Syberberg's home in Munich during the final stages of the film's editing. Owing to the short time available, Syberberg limited himself to a discussion of the film's form and content.

How is the film structured?

SYBERBERG: There are twenty-two chapters which are all, up to a point, self-contained. They are connected by several masters of ceremonies who are in turn connected in a number of ways, through music and through sounds and, for example, by a large lilac-coloured coat. It's the coat that Richard Wagner wore in *Ludwig*: not Wagner's actual coat, but a device to represent him. The coat will either be worn by the masters of ceremonies or will be near them, draped over a chair perhaps. It's impossible for an actor to play Hitler: it was one of his strange powers that he was the best actor to play himself. Therefore, we have not tried to portray the whole Hitler: only small parts of him, ironically. All our actors are from time to time Hitler. We've not tried to recreate the Hitler of the newsreels either, but we do show him, for example, rising from the grave of Richard Wagner, which is something the newsreels could not have shown.

In *Ludwig's Cook* you described a powerful man through small and revealing domestic details. Have you found a comparable way of approaching Hitler?

Yes, there will be a chapter in which an SS servant talks about Hitler while walking through the Reich Chancellery—the building, of course, doesn't exist now, and you can only see it through our film, like a giant's palace. He walks through the walls like a ghost. There are sounds of events from 1933 to 1945 and the servant talks about socks, shirts and uniforms, but these are not as important as the sounds you hear. The intersection of people's memories and historical chronology is a very important feature of the film. This servant will be linked in another chapter to the character played by Peter Kern: this present-day man will be seen walking through the ruins of Obersalzberg, remembering the war. You know the impression of Peter Kern: he doesn't look like an SS man, but the character he plays wants to be an SS man and when he says 'Look at me, I used to be blond and blue-eyed and now everything I believed in is over', and when at the end he begins to weep the hymn *Deutschland, Deutschland über Alles*, you—the audience—don't know what to feel. This broken man is—in another form—Hitler's SS servant. You don't know whether you are against him or whether you pity him.

Is the tone of the film tragic or pathetic?

Pathetic. The whole time was very pathetic. On all sides. My film shows how the war ended in Europe with a whole culture, a whole continent destroyed. If, in his black way, Hitler had succeeded in establishing his concept of a heroic Europe (and he was very near to doing so), it would have been the tragic end of mankind as we had known it before. At the beginning of the film I show a little corner of the hell; at the end I show, not only hell, but also how the reality of Hitler is turned into a part of the entertainment industry.

How did your projection technique develop?

It's crazy. When you try to reproduce reality in the studio, you spend so much money and you try so hard and in the end it's still not reality. When I made *Ludwig*, I was looking for a way to establish a universe with a small budget. I wanted to use a fixed camera and a single location. I thought perhaps of using an old factory. I consulted the people at the Bavaria Studios and they told me about this projection method but warned me that I could not move the camera and I could not use close-ups. They were very surprised to hear that that was what I wanted.

Is the camera static in the Hitler film?

Now we can move the camera a little. But I don't find this an aesthetic problem. In *Ludwig* I didn't want to move the camera because of the opera scenery. But now it's not important—sometimes I do, sometimes I don't.

You have said that each of your films is different. In what ways does the Hitler film differ from the other features?

My Hitler film is not only the end of the trilogy [of *Ludwig* and *Karl May*], but it is also the climax of an aesthetic formula I have been trying to work out. Of course, there are things which I will use again and again in other films, but there are certain things which come to an end in this film. For instance, the front projection system. I will not use that again. I used it very naively in *Karl May* and *Ludwig*; but in *Hitler* you are aware of the artifice all the time—this, I think, is an advance. The audience is always aware of being in the studio. But this is a studio without walls. We built a house in the studio, modelled on Edison's Black Maria: an audience [of dummies] finds the whole world in the studio. There is another little black house, in a glass ball with snow crystals, which appears throughout the film. For me this is the Holy Grail of cinema—we start with it and we end with it, it is something very magical. ['To the right and left of the camera, the dummies crowd to look through the peepholes in the black cube, longing for a part of the circus. And, as the master of ceremonies Koberwitz suggests,

Hitler comes into view in the person of Heinz Schubert, Rainer von Artenfels, Hellmut Lange, Peter Moland and Johannes Buzalsky—ten different versions come and go: Hitler as orator, as child, as Hamlet, as Napoleon, as Caligari, as Jack-in-the-Box, as Charlie Chaplin's Great Dictator, as house-painter. There are many little Hitler moustaches which are affixed on the way to the play area.'—From a WDR report of Syberberg at work.]

Part of Hitler's attraction, you have said, stems from the fact that he was an extraordinary showman and that he was the man who got his chance, the kid in the fairy story who got the three wishes. How will you bring out these sides of Hitler?

Harry Baer, who played Ludwig, and André Heller from Vienna talk at length about these aspects of Hitler: that he was the biggest film-maker we ever had and how he created Nuremberg for Leni Riefenstahl and created the World War to have the newsreels which he saw every night before anyone else. Everyone wants to have his chance. Today, of course, it's not, as in the fairy stories, the chance to live in a castle. Today, if you had a wish, perhaps you'd want to be someone like Hitler who makes films and has the whole world as his studio. Even making a pact with the Devil to fulfil this wish.

You have called the third part of the film 'In the Night'. Is the final part in any way a dawn?

No, there is no new beginning. Well, in a way there is. I start with a little child, who is democracy, and I end with this child—who has gone through the film like Alice in Wonderland—and, of course, every time you use a child it does signify that something new is coming. But if you think of the historical development of Europe after the war, nothing new has emerged. We must all consider whether we are better than Hitler: we may have more humanity, but are our deeds any better? Hitler often asks these questions in the film. The film has several endings and one of these is the Last Judgment: the Devil, in the form of a Barbie doll, is in the position of Christ, and Hitler says, 'Come, let me judge if you are good or bad.'

The head of a critic, with closed eyes and ears, surrounded by 'ideology dolls of our present time'



FESTIVALS



'Le Diable Probablement'

Berlin

A young German expressed incomprehension; a veteran Australian filmgoer said he was bored; an esteemed American critic expostulated in anger over what he took to be a manifestation of the director's senility. By anyone's reckoning, **Le Diable Probablement** was not the unquestioned masterpiece of the 27th Berlin Film Festival; indeed, Derek Malcolm reported, the name of its director, Robert Bresson, was unknown to one of his fellow jurors. True, there were other films as committed to their subject—**Camada Negra**, Manuel Gutiérrez Aragón's bludgeoning assault on the Spanish fascist mentality, was one—but no new film I saw, either in or out of competition, matched the rigour, control and density, or the sense of commitment to an unfashionable metaphysical subject, of Bresson's darkly beautiful late work.

Caught, it seems, in some forgotten corner of the world, a nocturnal riverboat moves slowly across the screen: its lights offer no guidance and barely illuminate the murky surface of the Seine. Thus Bresson begins his dissection of the events leading to the suicide of a young Parisian, Charles (Antoine Monnier, another of the director's non-professional archetypes), whose apparent passivity—in the face of sloganeering left-wing politics, a hypocritical Church, the empty comforts of physical love and the fruitless ministrations of psychiatry—even- tually gives way to a courageous and, as Bresson sees it, not wholly unheroic act of sacrificial self-destruction. There is no room here to describe the film's texture of

repeated shots and cross-references or Bresson's spare evocation of modern city life or the manner in which we pillage the planet (the absolute finality of a clubbed seal, a felled tree). Suffice it to say that the film *is* a masterpiece (not least because of its modernity) and that its final sequence, Charles' journey through Paris with the drug addict who, in the Roman manner, is to act as his executioner, proves—if proof is needed—that Bresson remains the passionate and, in innumerable ways, pre-eminent master of his art.

If *Le Diable Probablement* was the Festival's most substantial offering, François Truffaut's **L'Homme qui Aimait les Femmes** was its most ephemeral. Whereas *Le Diable* begins with a concise shot of a newspaper story announcing Charles' death, *L'Homme* starts with the jokey funeral of its protagonist (Charles Denner), a compulsive but not unlikeable womaniser, and then proceeds on a leisurely, unfocused flashback through his affairs with a succession of conventionally pretty women. (One wished he would fall for just one oddity.) The film is packed with references to Truffaut's other movies, with each woman the hero falls for having her counterpart elsewhere. But this indulgence—like Truffaut's now compulsory Hitchcockian cameo—soon wears thin, and the film's central idea, the elusive magic of *Everywoman*, by the end seems just another male chauvinist fantasy.

Under the new direction of Dr. Wolf Donner the Festival has immensely expanded its fringe events (a selection of new German films was particularly welcome), but the old selection criteria still apply, it seems, to the standard-bearing national

products. Among the few exceptions to these makeweight vehicles was Pál Sándor's **A Strange Role**, an elliptical tale of a rebel boy who, fleeing in 1919 from the agents of the Austro-Hungarian government, finds himself, disguised as a woman, trapped in an isolated female sanatorium. Richly photographed by Elemér Ragalyi, the film catches the boy's sense of timeless dislocation and the manner in which his identity as a 'nurse' first compromises him and then begins to alter his perception of life.

The war, thirty-eight years after it began, the division of Germany and shadow of the concentration camps, remain pressing and unresolved subjects for German filmmakers; and even with the absence from the Festival of the anticipated extracts of Syberberg's Hitler film, the dictator's ghost was manifest in a number of notable films. It was instructional to compare **The 81st Blow**, a grainy Franco-Israeli record of Nazi atrocities and life in the Warsaw ghetto, with Joachim C. Fest's mammoth chronological documentary, **Hitler—eine Karriere**. The former, employing amateur footage shot by German soldiers, spoke silently for itself, a record of injustice neither to be forgiven nor forgotten; the latter a new-minted, unadorned documentary on the rise of a military dictatorship (the images are as immediate as today's television news), a serious attempt—and, significantly, one of the most popular films of the Festival with the German public—to uncover the past and try to reconcile it with the present. Konrad Wolf's **Mama, ich lebe** treated, with considerable subtlety and power, the predicament of four German prisoners-of-war who join the Red Army and return to fight their fellow countrymen. For all its pro-Russian bias, the film leaves its end provocatively open, tacitly acknowledging the insolubility of the men's dilemma.

The most effective of the new German war films was Theodor Kotulla's **Aus einem deutschen Leben**, based on a novel by Robert Merle from the memoirs of Rudolf Höss, the commandant of Auschwitz. A series of titled chapters leads us from the First War to the concentration camps, detailing in a deliberately flat and unsensational manner a simple man's progress through the Nazi Party. When Himmler tells him in a hushed voice that he has been chosen to carry out the Final Solution, one understands, perhaps for the first time, how it was possible for a man—not mad, but merely unquestioningly obedient—to have accepted such a task so calmly. The film reverses our expectations all along the way. Seen from the point of view of the commandant, Auschwitz is indeed a leafy work camp; the gas chambers, a practical example of German efficiency.

Edgar Reitz's **Stunde Null**, on the other hand, took a more benevolent attitude towards its protagonists, a small community living round a railway crossing and apprehensively awaiting the Russian and American armies. Filmed in black and white, flecked with humour and with the sense of a group of born losers trying as best they can to come to terms with the consequences of military defeat, Reitz's film focuses on a cocksure boy who mistakenly believes that his cache of looted Nazi treasure (buried as if in a fairy story) will buy his salvation in

the New World. At the end, he is at the title's 'point zero', having lost his treasure and his girl to the American military police, and faced with the now inescapable fact of having to begin his life anew.

Recent works from the 'New German Cinema' yielded salutary examples of modest, enjoyable commercial film-making. **Bomber & Paganini**, a sharp and stylish comedy, directed by Nicos Perakis at times rather in the manner of a nightclub act, was a vigorous yarn about two no-hope crooks (one blind, one crippled, thanks to their own efforts), bound together by their mutual hatred and dependency and desperate for a slightly surreal revenge on the cabaret owner who has double-crossed them. Klaus Emmerich's **Hauptmann Kreutzer** crossed the path of another pair of crooks, bank robbers fleeing by train, with that of an army captain (Rudiger Vogler) being returned under guard to barracks. The neatly executed script occasionally takes off into whimsical comic territory, but for the most part confines itself to a wry examination of the roots of leadership, as the indecisive captain allows himself to be taken to freedom for the second time by the cannier crook.

Perhaps the most engaging film of the Festival was a first feature directed by a Swiss, Erwin Keusch: **Das Brot des Bäckers**, a low-key account of the progress of an apprentice in a small-town bakery, crammed with the fascinating, authentic details of a working life. The film never overplays the slightly melodramatic events of the boy's life: the half-hearted attempted suicide of the girl who has a crush on him is accepted quite naturally as something that has happened but is afterwards best not talked about. Equally compelling, though for its economy rather than an extended impressionistic style, was Sohrab Shahid Saless' **Tagebuch eines Liebenden**, an immaculately edited account of the non-events in the life of a man who, it is revealed at the end, has killed his girl friend and hidden her body under his bed. Saless' hypnotic style—relying on images rather than words—once again peeled open the world of one of life's losers by suggestion rather than revelation.

Volker Schlöndorff's documentary **Nur zum Spass—Nur zum Spiel/Kaleidoskop Valeska Gert**, notwithstanding its title (*For Fun Only—For Play Only . . .*), revealed the more exotic and extrovert world of that still vibrantly energetic 'performer' Valeska Gert (seen most recently in the same director's *Coup de Grâce*), who lives in Bohemian splendour on the island of Sylt. Included is some rare footage of Valeska's 'athletic' dances: the young actress brought in to re-create those not already on film found herself, however, consistently upstaged by this wiry survivor from the silent cinema. Another survivor cropped up in Werner Herzog's **La Soufrière**. The director and his cameraman Jörg Schmidt-Reitwein made a perilous expedition to Guadeloupe, which had been evacuated in anticipation of the eruption of the volcano La Soufrière, to question a man rumoured to have refused to leave the doomed island. When at last they find him—fast asleep on the mountainside with a cat curled up at his head—they manage to elicit only the matter-of-fact comment that he is staying behind because it is God's

will; then other men turn up, one of whom, the father of a large family, rather disconcertingly says that he will stay unless Herzog wishes to give him a lift to the mainland. In the end, the volcano inexplicably fails to erupt.

Finally, one of the Festival's most make-shift and at the same time most amusing entries, a first feature by former Philippines economist Kidlat Tahimik, **Mababangong Bangunot**. Kidlat, the President of the Manila branch of the Wernher von Braun Fan Club and driver of a multi-coloured jeep-cum-minibus, sets off for America, his imagined spiritual home; in Paris, however, he is awakened to the realities of modern industrial society (very different from the beauty of von Braun's spaceships) and is in his mind transported back to his poor native country in the jet-propelled chimney of a supermarket. Sentimental, astonishing and quirky, the film, starring Tahimik himself, succeeds against the odds because the director manages to convey his passionate belief in what he is doing.

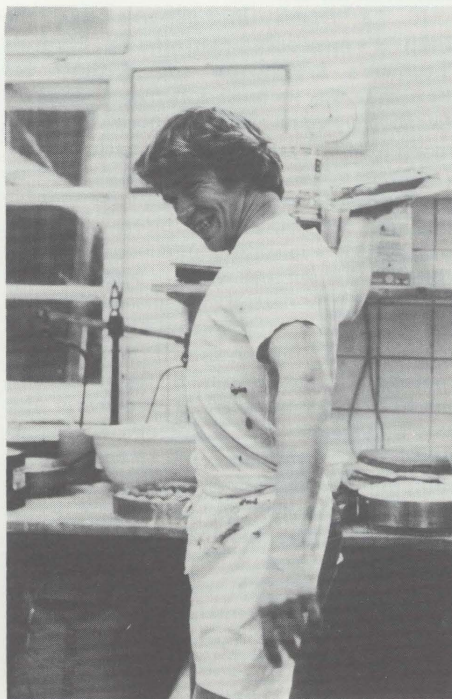
JOHN PYM

Locarno

Random images of a festival. A pet shop python slowly and messily engorges a white mouse. A rattlesnake slides into a sleeping-bag, menacing its occupant in stomach-churning close-up for at least a reel and a half. At the open air screenings in the piazza howling dogs and cats, with deadly timing, punctuate the films and puncture their pretensions. The fact that these are all animal images betokens a general sense at Locarno this year that the festival was offering a particularly depressed view of humanity. Alienation was much in evidence on the screen; and much experienced by spectators.

For a festival whose jamboree aspects are (mercifully) muted, Locarno glumly celebrated its thirtieth birthday. A broadsheet distributed by a political pressure group complained of an elitist event of no interest to the town and of no help to Swiss cinema,

'Das Brot des Bäckers'



currently undergoing a crisis of identity because of the discriminatory anomalies of the country's federal system. The Italian-speaking area feels particularly hard done by, a fact brought home to local audiences by a Ticinese film, **San Gottardo**, which documents the cultural colonisation of the region following the construction of the rail and road tunnels through the St. Gothard pass. Pointedly, for the local complainers, the festival's official language is not Italian but French.

Language is a problem for any festival. The French and German subtitles on Woody Allen's **Annie Hall** (reviewed elsewhere in this issue) simply couldn't cope with this spry film's American Jewish humour and knowing nuances. The language barrier was neatly negotiated by a German film, Walter Bockmayer and Rolf Bühmann's **Jane bleibt Jane**, in which an old lady, newly ensconced in a pensioners' home, is so persuaded she is Tarzan's mate that she tends to lapse into jungle talk. Furnishing her room with parrot, potted palms and Tarzan posters, she unblinkingly offers a home-made banana liqueur to a journalist who befriends her. Apart from the parrot and a stuffed chimpanzee (she baulks at a python, too real for the comfort of illusion), the journalist is her only companion. The other pensioners think she's mad and torment her accordingly; but the film deftly suggests that there is a kind of sanity in her fancy, or at least the safety-valve of a harmless caprice. The apes in the zoo may laugh at her attempts to converse with them and the Tarzan materialising out of the snow exists only in her mind's eye, but she happily connects with her own reality. Even at the end, as she boards a plane for Africa, changes into her leopard skin costume and assures a worried fellow passenger that she needs no help from mere humans.

Jane bleibt Jane came with an *imprimatur* from Fassbinder, whose own **Bollwieser** was shown in its original, four-hour television version. This is Fassbinder in his most Sirkian mood, with a heady melodrama about steamy goings on in a small Bavarian town just after the First World War. Bollwieser (Kurt Raab) is a minor railway official who loses his wife to another man, amid much gossip and recrimination, and ends up in jail, a victim of the lies which shakily underpin a superficially stable community. Emotion is rendered by decor as Fassbinder's camera caresses art nouveau mirrors and shelves of porcelain. The colour, and the mood, is dark: the cracks which threaten this hermetically sealed social fabric conceal the first stirrings of German fascism.

Communities cracking under stress made a recurring theme at Locarno. Images linger from one film or another of people quietly—and noisily—going mad. Christian Bricout's ironically titled **Paradiso** depicts a hell on earth, beginning with an archetypal Fassbinder scene in which the father of a working-class family in a northern French industrial town works himself into a paroxysm of rage at the dinner table. Thereafter the film conducts the family's teenage son on a sleazy odyssey of discos and despair, through drugs, casual sex and a final gratification of sorts with his middle-aged confidante, a public lavatory attendant of philosophical bent. Bricout's camera fastens relentlessly on the blocked exits from this grey world, manip-

ulating its effects only in a final, accelerating circumference of a darkened room.

A different kind of despair is reflected in Patricia Moraz's **Les Indiens sont encore loin**. Set in Lausanne, and representing the city as a state of mind (the Swiss mind, blandly disengaged), this is a sombre study of a schoolgirl during the last week of her life, the unexceptionable days and nights before she is found dead in the snow. The Indians of the title are a lost tribe, destroyed because they cannot assimilate an alien culture (or vice versa), and the implication is that the girl is similarly stranded in limbo. She stands apart, aloof and uncommunicative, her friends' conversation drifting over her like so much muzak. The film was much liked, its uninflected style evoking comparisons with Bresson. I found it calculated and indulgent, conjuring a world so monochrome that it seemed like another planet. Swiss film-makers should not make only a metaphor of their toneless towns.

Similarly monotone, but more insistent, was the Norwegian Vibeke Løkkeberg's **The Revelation**, which unrelentingly catalogues a woman's menopausal anguish, substituting its own clichés for those it purports to undermine. The woman is fat and fifty, and first seen pathetically failing to cope with her first paid job in a department store demonstrating inflatable coat-hangers. Humiliations along the way to silent screaming (Munch country, this) include her husband's little indiscretion, a soiled sanitary towel and a stroke-paralysed, bedridden father. The actress, Marie Takvam, needed courage and deserves praise for a sensitive portrait of a distressed woman. But the film's implacably grey landscape shuts out sympathy for its feminist cause.

Such a film distorts its subject, bending truth by draining it of light and shade. Uncertainty of gesture and emotion is not only more attractive but more authentic. **Sven Klang's Combo**, for instance, doodled round its subject, its focus unfixed and therefore more persuasive. A popular music quartet, playing the rounds of provincial dance halls in mid-50s Sweden, is shaken out of its amateur complacency by the addition of a jazz saxophonist whose free-wheeling style disturbs the comfortable harmony of their music and their lives. Trivial embarrassments escalate into major rows, and the newcomer eventually goes his own way when the group's sleek and smug leader insists that his presence is disruptive. Quietly counterpointing the uncomplicated enthusiasms and emotional turmoils of what now seems an innocent age, Stellan Olsson's film has resonance beyond its deceptively simple surface.

Jazz is also the background to Larry Clark's **Passing Through**, but the resemblance ends there. The theme, played on a single note, is the exploitation of black American musicians by nasty white entrepreneurs, a crime avenged in a machine-gun finale which fittingly caps the film's unmediated message that black is beautiful and will find its native voice. A voice so shrill will go unheard. More sophisticated but in its way no less shrill is **The Rubber Gun**, a film from the same Canadian team who made **Montreal Main**. An earnest sociology student (played by the director, Allan Moyle) befriends a drugs dealer and his user friends: field work for a thesis. Semi-improvised by



'The Crown of Sonnets'

just such a group, the film approaches a few moments of truth but too loudly proclaims its thesis that drugs are fine as long as you don't use them. Drugs, in the shape of morphine addiction, reappeared in Ross Devenish's **The Guest**, which documents an episode in the life of the South African writer and naturalist Eugene Marais when he was nursed through a painful withdrawal by a family of Afrikaner farmers. Scripted by Athol Fugard, who also plays Marais, the film has already been seen on British television but deserves a wider audience.

A clutch of Italian films elicited a grudging respect but gave off no sparks. Both Franco Giraldi's **Un Anno di Scuola** (about a girl's disruptive effect on a class of late adolescent boys in the Trieste of 1914) and Gianfranco Mingozzi's **Gli Ultimi tre Giorni** (a boy manipulated by fascists into an assassination attempt on Mussolini) were produced by Italian television, and confirmed an impression that RAI's enterprising production programme has lost its impetus. Lino Del Fra's **Antonio Gramsci** is a straightforward,

rather lumbering account of the Marxist theoretician's years in prison, methodically but superficially rehearsing his Socratic dialogues with fellow prisoners. The film took the main prize, one suspects more for content than for style.

Finally, a Russian war film, **The Crown of Sonnets**, which breaks new ground with its lyrical-whimsical approach to a hackneyed theme. It was made by Valery Roubinchik in Byelorussia, and episodically charts the progress of two young army musicians who want to get to the front line in the last days of the war. The combination of a restless camera, surrealist compositions (clocks in fields) and a bitter-sweet tone prompts memories of Czech cinema a decade ago. Which, when you think about it, is a fine irony. And a brief word for two admirable retrospectives: the major films of Stiller, and a tribute to the Swiss production company Citel Films, producer of films by Tanner, Goretta and Schmid and co-producer of Alain Resnais' *Providence*.

DAVID WILSON

'Sven Klang's Combo'



RENOIR

AND THE ILLUSION OF DETACHMENT

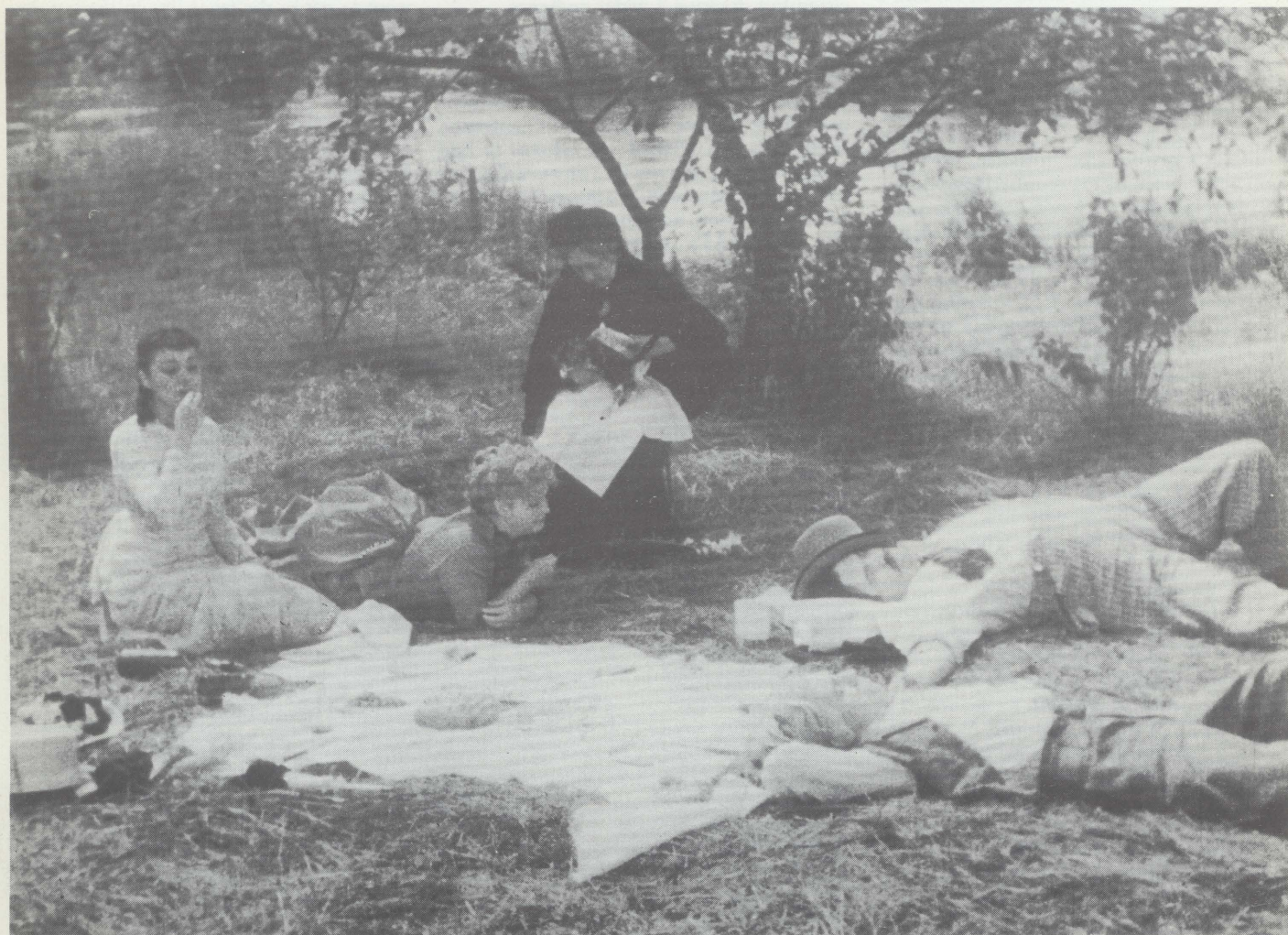
Don Willis

If, sometimes, particular shots in Jean Renoir's films seem at first baffling, it may be because their meaning is not complete in the shots themselves, only in their context, in the film and in Renoir's work as a whole. For example, in *French Cancan* (1955), the lovesick prince's strange vigil in the huge ceremonial chair. The prince sits alone in the middle of an empty hall, while in a room far down at the end 'his' Nini and the impresario Danglard hold their tryst. These shots find a resonance only in the climactic sequence—in the similar shots of Danglard, alone backstage, in apparently that same chair. Thus isolated (like the prince), Danglard none the less exults in the sounds of the first performance of his creation, the cancan. In this elegant visual analogy, lover's frustration—the beloved's autonomy—transposed, becomes creator's fulfilment. Similarly, in Renoir's silent version of Zola's *Nana* (1926), the sudden track back from the courtesan Nana, roughly flinging her presents on her bed, to a full shot of the bedroom underscores its resemblance to a stage and Nana's to an actress on it, but is only 'completed' by almost the last shot in the film, a complementary track forward to the dying Nana in bed. If the earlier track back celebrates the ascendancy of theatre and artifice, the final slow track forward carries with it the sense of life intruding upon art, to the point of death.

Early in another Renoir film, *The Lower Depths* (1936), the camera tracks in with the impoverished baron (Louis Jouvet) when he enters the doss-house courtyard and approaches his friend Pépel (Jean Gabin). It continues over and down to Pépel, then tracks back to include both of them. Why these three light emphases (cuts would make them sharper): (1) the baron, (2) Pépel, (3) Pépel and the baron? There's no convenient answer, but one can note that the shot presents the baron and Pépel first as individuals and then as friends, as if to define and redefine each and also to suggest that one definition is a function of the other.

A four-shot sequence near the end of *The Lower Depths*, together with the shot just described, brackets the baron's life in the

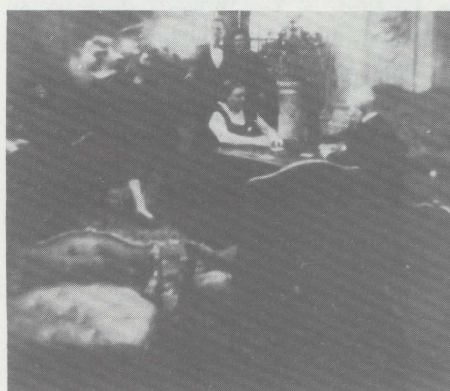
Below: 'Une Partie de Campagne'



doss-house: (1) the baron, announcing the death of the actor to his fellow boarders; (2) Pépel; (3) Natacha (Junie Astor); (4) Pépel and Natacha, now seen to be sitting together by the side of the road, just before they set out down it, away from the baron and the lower depths. The first three shots 'frame' the characters as individuals, in portraits. But if, in their emphasis on individuality, these one-shots linked by dissolves seem tinged with pessimism or doubt as to the couple's future, the last two-shot is 'optimistic', balancing. Like the earlier shot, this four-shot sequence is less a statement than a resonator of the filmmaker's concerns with societal alignment, fragmentation and realignment, with Renoir pulled one way, then another, as to what might happen after 'The End'.

Another shot and sequence, at an outdoor café, amplify the meaning of the four-shot sequence. In the first, single shot, Renoir tracks from a band playing lullingly at one end of a café, through the guests at the tables, to a room at the other end. A little later, in a parallel sequence of shots, Renoir again begins tracking from the bandstand but then *cuts* to one table, then to another group, then to another. Music and camera-work both are less lulling here. The contrast between these two—broken and unbroken—Sunday afternoon leisure sketches subtly undercuts the sense of harmony (anticipating Pépel's complete disruption of it a few minutes later with his forcible removal of Natacha). That first long tracking shot corresponds with the 'optimistic' two-shots—earlier, Pépel and the baron; later, Pépel and Natacha. The subsequent montage of patrons corresponds to the 'individualising' one-shots—the baron, Pépel; at the end, the baron, Pépel, Natacha. One set of images completes rather than cancels the other. Thus Renoir's co-themes of human interdependence and independence quietly shape and inform the film. It's as if he had in effect shot each of these sequences twice, from the perspectives of both the individual and society; as if he had 'superimposed' the track on the montage and the two-shots on the one-shots, in order not to lose sight of the whole in the part or the part in the whole.

In an earlier film, *Boudu Sauvé des Eaux* (1932), a neighbour's flute-playing evokes a sense of harmony, but it's a false harmony, an extension of the opening pastoral fantasy of Lestingois (Charles Granval) as satyr-with-pipe and his maid as nymph. Renoir's soundtrack and visuals keep undercutting the flute-player. Twice at least, over street scenes, the film switches abruptly from the sweet, unnatural sound of the flute to traffic sounds. And while the various members of the Lestingois household all sing the flute-player's tune or pick it out on the piano, they never sing in unison, or in the same way, or at the same time, or always even comprehensibly. At the end a long dreamlike track down a river, in a rowing-boat, appears to be the culmination of this pastoral dreaming: as an outdoor orchestra plays 'The Blue Danube', Lestingois, in the boat, blesses the marriage of the tramp Boudu (Michel Simon) and the maid. But the boat suddenly capsizes, leaving Boudu to float unresistingly downstream by himself. As he finally makes his way to shore 'The Blue Danube' resumes on the soundtrack, but



'La Règle du Jeu': 'the continuous motion of actors and camera ...'

less insistently, as if hesitant to invoke the now rather battered idea of harmony. The last we see of Boudu he's lustfully rasping some tune as a boat whistles shrilly off-screen: pastoral beauty, but of an impure, natural sort. It's no coincidence that the neighbour who plays the flute is also the one who plays the trumpet that heralds Boudu's cuckoldling of Lestingois, and the one at the oars when Boudu upsets the boat: as in the café sequence in *The Lower Depths*, false harmony gives way easily to honest discord.

In *La Règle du Jeu* (1939), La Chesnaye's house guests take his servants' wild shooting and running about as just another of their host's staged entertainments; and, ironically, Renoir's perception of life in the film—as an ordered chaos—does not seem to be far from their (mis)apprehension. If the sum effect of Renoir's films prior to *La Règle du Jeu* is a sense of disparateness, this same sense is the point of *departure* for his major later films, in which, as he put it in his novel, *The Notebooks of Captain Georges*, 'everything is a whole, not only man but the universe.' With *La Règle du Jeu*, Renoir is clearly beginning to comprehend the idea of our disparateness as, paradoxically, a unifying factor, a common denominator. If

his earlier films suggest that we're unlike, the implication from the greater perspective of the later films is that in that unlikeness at least, we're alike.

In *La Règle du Jeu* the multiple planes of action within shots and the constant reframing of actors evoke a harmony in cacophony. In one long tracking shot, in the 'Danse Macabre' sequence, the crazily coruscating flashes of light successively pick out one guest, then another, who are as quickly and arbitrarily lost again in shadows. The track and the flashing lights function like the café tracking shot and montage in *The Lower Depths*. Here, however, Renoir actually finds a way to 'superimpose' one upon the other: the flashing-light 'montage' and the track are the same shot. Harmony in cacophony. Renoir's *La Chienne* (1931) and *La Grande Illusion* (1937) take up one character or thread of a relationship at a time, dropping one for the other. The effect of the continuous motion of actors and camera in *La Règle du Jeu* is one of simultaneity, not only within shots, but from shot to shot, in the overlapping knots of action *before* the camera and in the continuity of action from shot to shot *implied* by the criss-crossings of characters and reframing of actors. *La Chienne* and *La Grande Illusion* are mosaical; *La Règle du Jeu* is kaleidoscopic.

Raymond Durnat imaginatively describes one shot in *The River* (1951), of a postman chatting with a friend while children play in the foreground, as 'a bouquet of mutually irrelevant existences',* and similar garlands are strewn throughout the film. Its various elements—narrative, pictorial, documentary, dramatic and cultural—blend so imperceptibly that they disappear into the total fabric of the film. For instance: over an extended shot of the tumult of the Bengali market place, the narrator, Harriet, describes the dizzying variety of vendors and wares. It's only incidentally, it seems, that she herself enters the frame and makes her way through the crowd as she pursues Captain John. It's as if the story were unobtrusively slipping through a documentary on Indian life. In one sequence dissolves and piano music link several introductory shots of the scattered characters; in another dissolves and the sound of a flute link shots of people lounging around a house in the afternoon. Here the flute and the piano are used to create a sense of harmonious diversity (of people and places) rather than, as in *Boudu*, a false harmony. Harriet's story-within-the-story is related in the same succession-of-dissolves style that much of Renoir's and Rumer Godden's story is; thus it continues and blends with rather than interrupts it. There are no clear lines of demarcation. Renoir's tilts from characters up to trees, sky and river and the dissolves on lateral tracking shots suggest that everything and everyone is an extension of everything else, in every direction, in time as well as space. Just as the little Indian girl in Harriet's story becomes, like magic, a young woman before our eyes, in a time-lapse series of dissolves, so the Harriet we see as a girl will become the adult Harriet we hear, the film's narrator. 'Everything is a whole,' past,

* Raymond Durnat, *Jean Renoir* (Studio Vista, 1975).



'The Lower Depths': 'a dreamlike change of clothes between the baron and Pépel'

present, future. But, for Renoir, interdependence also always implies independence, cacophony.

Renoir the director is not Legrand (Michel Simon), his protagonist, but there are points in the epilogue to *La Chienne* when the two appear momentarily to conjoin. In the body of the story, Legrand gleefully effects a comic reconciliation between his shrewish wife and her first husband, long thought dead. He also (uncomically) murders his mistress, Lulu, who goads him into it with her declarations of love for the pimp Dédé. He allows the latter to be convicted for his crime. He's also fired from his job as a cashier for embezzlement. Legrand has lost everything. Now a bum, he runs into his wife's first husband the sergeant, also a bum since her death. Legrand tells him, 'I've been a junk man, hobo, thief and, to begin with, a murderer.' The sergeant, suitably impressed, laughs, a bit unsure whether that's the reaction sought or proper. Legrand's words constitute a reaction, I think, to his life, rather than a careless boast. Understandably, he's also not quite sure how to 'react', or how to express his reaction, to the events in his life. He tries to make his admission of murder a joke, but then isn't the joke on him? In the space of minutes in the epilogue he says both, 'I wouldn't mind being dead myself' and 'Life is beautiful', two distinct and, one would think, irreconcilable views. This kind of vacillating response anticipates the multiple viewpoint of later films like *The River*.

Legrand's strange summation of his life—he says 'murderer' as if it were an occupation—also echoes the baron's depiction of his life, in *The Lower Depths*, as a mist or a dream of 'changing clothes', frock coat to dressing gown to rags. (An odd time-lapse dolly to the window indeed effects a dreamlike change of clothes, and seats, between the baron and Pépel, as if it were only chance that made the baron the baron and Pépel Pépel: when the camera comes back to them, still playing cards at dawn, Pépel is wearing the baron's coat and the baron

wears Pépel's hat. And Octave (who is played by Renoir himself) says at one point in *La Règle du Jeu*, 'When I think it's all passed me by it does something to me. I try to work out what happened.' Characters like the baron and Octave are trying, in retrospect, to make some sense of an illogical, dreamlike chain of events—life—an effort that it would never occur to someone like Dédé to make. As links between film and film-maker, they help to illuminate the processes at work in Renoir's films. In their more or less neutral, or neutralised state, the baron, Legrand and Octave are like pieces of the artist Renoir.

But, like Dédé, they are also, however tangentially, a part of their society. Octave, for instance, tries to be fair both to himself and to others, but he's too involved in the action to be perfectly impartial. He's the one in fact who 'stages' the weekend in the country, which brings La Chesnaye, his wife Christine and her admirer Jurieu together and ends in the latter's death. He plays his most crucial part at the last when he thinks he has finally renounced himself, and he unwittingly sends Jurieu to his death. The baron's 'realistic' outlook also results in death: his puncturing of the actor's illusions is almost directly responsible for the latter's suicide. Octave, the baron and Legrand, who at key points in their lives approach the lucidity of viewpoint of the director, cannot escape or entirely comprehend the consequences of those lives, which are like ever widening concentric waves.

The informing scene in *The Lower Depths* is the farewell, in the courtyard, between the baron and the departing Pépel and Natacha. As the actor, off-screen, declaims—then hangs himself—the baron observes, 'He has talent!' Pépel, embracing the baron, tells him, 'You've been a real pal (*copain*).' Through these two apparently unrelated actions, or statements, Renoir crystallises the meaning of his characters and of their relationships. This brief but crucial scene is like a précis of the baron: passive and self-detached, the baron (like the self-absorbed Dédé) is yet not isolated. He is one thing to

Pépel—a friend and a benign influence, or at least a demonstration of social mobility one way—and another to the actor. The baron's detachment is ultimately not a neutrality but another force, like Pépel's determination to live or Dédé's self-involvement in *La Chienne*, or Boudu's self-involvement in *Boudu*.

At the beginning of the film the baron gives Pépel a bronze of two horses. In the courtyard scene at the end Pépel separates them and gives one horse back to the baron, in appreciation of his friendship. In the last sequence Pépel's half of the bronze lies between Natacha and him as they sit beside the road, its presence a droll recognition of the baron's influence on their lives, and the informal equivalent and reinforcement of a more formal recognition—the dissolve from the baron to Pépel in the first two shots of the same sequence. In the famous last, receding shot, Pépel is shown gamely lugging the bronze along with him on one shoulder as the couple walk down the road.

Octave improves on the lucidity of Legrand and the baron: 'I feel like disappearing down a hole. It would help me not to see anything more, not to search any more, for what's good and what's bad.' He realises the impossibility of complete objectivity. Unlike Legrand or the baron, he realises that he's still in the grip of life. If Octave oscillates throughout *La Règle du Jeu* between involvement and detachment, he is aware of it, as the baron appears unaware of his implication in the actor's death and in Pépel's life. However dreamlike and capricious life may seem, its arbitrariness never quite frees one from accountability for one's actions.

Le Caporal Epingle (1962), ironically, constitutes Renoir's most pessimistic deliberation on the subject of detachment. On the surface the film is high comedy, but comedy growing out of or into something unsettling and unstated, just intimidated by the images. The corporal's attempts to escape the German P.O.W. camps are generally quite funny; but each episode of this World War II escape comedy extends and intensifies a sub-text of frustration, puzzlement and irony. When the corporal (Jean-Pierre Cassel) makes his first escape attempt, his friend Ballochot (Claude Rich) loses his glasses (intentionally, as he later admits) and has to remain behind. The corporal and another P.O.W., Pater (Claude Brasseur), scale the wall but are quickly recaptured. The corporal's several escape attempts are excitingly staged celebrations of energy and ingenuity—but Renoir records them like dry facts. He shoots this first one from a discreet distance: the camera, thus detached from the action, subordinates the exhilaration of the prisoners' momentary freedom to the process of escape and return. The corporal will inevitably try to escape and, just as inevitably, will not succeed. The dull, grey monotony of the terrain in *The Elusive Corporal* is like a subliminal justification of the corporal's repeated escape attempts. But the Paris that he and Pater achieve at the end is equally drab and bleak.

Camaraderie, in the film's context, is also acquiescence; individual heroism is also selfishness. And the one, through contact, gives the other its sub-definition. The movie,

thus precariously balanced, can be misread in two possible, opposing ways: as an indictment of the corporal who, in his obsession with escape, is a thoughtless wrecker of havoc, whose 'dead-end heroism', in Leo Braudy's words, leads 'so many to needless death.'^{*} Or it can be interpreted as a condemnation of the other prisoners as passive collaborationists, as William S. Pechter more plausibly suggests: '... the possibility of individual freedom remains alive... in the elusive corporal who, though realised in his individual particularity... remains nevertheless, without psychology or biography, an almost pure expression of the will to freedom.'[†] But the corporal, though hardly the villain Braudy suggests, is not quite the dynamic hero of Pechter's description either. His heroic exploits function something like Jurieu's heroism in *La Règle du Jeu*, as simply another element (if the most prominent one) in the social tapestry. It's more the nature of the individual than the nature of heroism that's in question.

The key shot in *The Elusive Corporal* is one of the few dramatic close shots, and the only one that calls attention to itself through staging and camera placement. The camera is fixed on the corporal, in the barracks, as Ballochet, offscreen, is making an almost suicidal night-escape attempt, in conscious imitation of the corporal's heroics. At the sound of the machine-gun fire, the corporal flinches in horror, as if he's taking the bullets himself. This is the only point in the film at which we are 'inside' the corporal, rather than outside simply observing him. The shot is so radically out of keeping with the general tone of the film, so stylistically disruptive, that it seems to be a terrible mistake. But in a film so perfectly imagined and controlled, such a stylistic shock is clearly calculated. This shot in fact alters the meaning of the film, and its graphic presentation is obviously intended to alert the viewer to its contextual importance.

That this shot appears to be a mistake is partly due to the fact that Ballochet's death has no effect, other than physical and immediate, on the corporal, despite the fact that the corporal was largely responsible. It was his example, and his slap, that spurred the weak Ballochet to his suicidal mission. But the corporal goes on trying to escape. In *The Lower Depths* the baron does not explicitly acknowledge responsibility for the actor's death, while in *La Règle du Jeu* Octave, who comprehends his complicity in the death of Jurieu, leaves the château and, apparently, the social world it represents. But the corporal both comprehends and continues: this is the sense of the key shot in *The Elusive Corporal*, in the context of what precedes it and what follows. In effect it splits open the narrative—for a few seconds the corporal is Ballochet, and his enlightenment is almost visceral, consistent with the film's sketching of the corporal almost exclusively in physical terms ('without psychology or biography').

Why does Renoir apparently not follow up on this shot? Durnat sees it setting the corporal off on the 'road to altruism'. But perhaps the corporal is back at the end (after



'Le Caporal Epinglé': Jean-Pierre Cassel

a brief detour), travelling the same road that he was at the beginning of the film. Ballochet and a pretty dental assistant *do* in fact temporarily convert the corporal, not to altruism but to luxuriating in the life at hand—in the prison camp and with the girl, who works nearby. When by chance the girl brings him back to himself, the corporal promptly returns to camp, sealing his awareness of his self-betrayal with the slap which he administers to Ballochet.

But that slap becomes a link in a chain reaction. It marks the end of the corporal's self-betrayal, but it also marks the beginning of Ballochet's own exercise in self-renunciation. It puts Ballochet on the 'road to altruism'—which, as with Octave, ends in death, and as with Lestingois, in disaster. Escape, for the corporal, is purely a reflex action, inherently neither selfish nor altruistic. But for Ballochet it's a noble, *considered* gesture (just as, in *The River*, 'being obedient' like her sister would be for the more realistically ignoble Harriet, who observes, 'It's easy for her to be good. She is good'). In *Boudu* Renoir sets up a similar opposition between Boudu and Lestingois: asked the time, Boudu searches for the watch Lestingois gave him and forgets the tray he's holding, spilling the dishes on the floor. He notes in semi-conscious self-defence that Lestingois 'didn't think of his watch' when he rescued Boudu from drowning, and thus wrecked the mechanism. The subtle difference between the two actions is that Boudu's is *reflex* and negligent, or natural, while Lestingois' heroic rescue was *conscious* and negligent, or unnatural. Not that Renoir is necessarily anti-altruistic. He's simply aware of the limits of selflessness and is drawn to the subject. For if people at their selfless best mess things up, how can they—at their normal non-best—hope to set them right again?

In *The Elusive Corporal* Ballochet converts the corporal to his philosophy of living; then the corporal, unwittingly, converts Ballochet, with a slap that turns his own self-realisation into a condemnation of his

friend. For a short time each acts, for him, unnaturally. Camaraderie becomes mutual corruption. The corporal's enlightenment is twofold: first he gains a certain basic self-awareness, then, through Ballochet's death, an awareness of others, of *their* sense of self. Why doesn't he act on this knowledge? He does. He follows his nature. In a sense, he goes through the film (as Boudu goes through *Boudu*) as if nothing has happened to him. But his sense of self has been reinforced. This accounts for the melancholic air of the ending: he knows he has no alternative. He must 'consent', to use Melanie's term, for acquiescence to fact, in *The River*. *Le Caporal Epinglé*—the corporal, pinned.

On their way back to France, the corporal and Pater come across a French P.O.W. working a farm for a German woman he intends to marry. The corporal asks why he hasn't tried to escape to France. The labourer says he has no land to return to. The corporal accepts his statement, or reason, adding only that *he* is going back. He says and does nothing which might influence the man to change his mind. He doesn't, for instance, confess that he too has nothing to go back to. He also accepts Pater's explanation of his presence to the labourer—'My home's where my friend's is'—and can because Pater is not another corrupted Ballochet. Pater is as he admits a natural 'follower', as Ballochet was not, and so the corporal is not responsible for Pater's risking of his life, at least in the way he was for Ballochet's. *The Elusive Corporal* finally concerns the unalterable diversity of human nature and, collaterally, the precariousness of the individual in society, and the precariousness of society given this diversity.

William S. Pechter posits contrary impulses towards freedom and society in Renoir as forming the basis of his art. I would suggest the related themes of involvement and detachment, or subjectivity and objectivity, their encroachment upon one another, and even their collusion. (Octave's renunciation

* Leo Braudy, *Jean Renoir* (Garden City, New York, 1972; Robson Books, London, 1977).

† William S. Pechter, *Twenty-four Times a Second* (Harper and Row, New York, 1971).

and Schumacher's jealous rage, for instance, both play a part in Jurieu's death.) This conflict/collusion takes different forms in different films: community/individuality in *La Grande Illusion*, *La Règle du Jeu*, *This Land is Mine* (1943) and *Le Caporal Epingle*; social involvement/lack of involvement in *La Chienne* and *The Lower Depths*; life-character/theatre-role in *Nana*, *The Golden Coach* (1953), *French Cancan* and *The Little Theatre of Jean Renoir* (1970); nature/science in *Le Déjeuner sur l'Herbe* and *The Testament of Dr. Cordelier* (both 1959). Renoir's own artistic detachment is not unfailing. In certain films he's too obviously on one side or the other. He takes the side of nature in the smugly anti-intellectual *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*. Individuality is a little too handily equated with middle-class selfishness and sacrificed to community in *This Land is Mine*. Theatre dominates *French Cancan*, in part because (as also in *Eléna et les Hommes*, 1956) the two-dimensional characters have no life; but the film none the less has some exciting theatre and, as suggested earlier, exquisite structural design. *La Bête Humaine* (1938), *Diary of a Chambermaid* (1946) and *The Woman on the Beach* (1947) are too confused to be sorted out at all, though *La Bête Humaine* is partially redeemed by some strong sequences and Simone Simon's performance.

The great, tacit assumption informing Renoir's best work is that perfect detachment from life is impossible. It underlies his greatest films, among which I would include at least *La Chienne*, *Boudu*, *Le Crime de M. Lange* (1936), *The Lower Depths*, *Une Partie de Campagne* (1936), *La Grande Illusion*, *La Règle du Jeu*, *The River*, *The Golden Coach* and *The Elusive Corporal*. Even Renoir's aesthetic detachment presupposes, paradoxically, an immersion in life. The broad human canvas of his films implies an embrace of all life, not just a domesticable part of it. *The Golden Coach* celebrates the power of artistic detachment. But even on stage the actress Camilla admits that she misses her lovers 'a little', this wry afterthought acknowledging the fact that pure artistic freedom is a happy fantasy. Similarly, even the adult Harriet, the narrator of *The River*, and the Legrand of the end of *La Chienne*, are tied to life, both in an implied present and—since one not only looks back on but is his or her past—a depicted past.

The Golden Coach is a celebration of human potential; *The Elusive Corporal*, like *La Règle du Jeu*, a lament for its limits. But Camilla, the corporal and Octave, who are like three definitions of heroism—artistic, existential, reflective—are alike denied the freedom of total detachment from life. Detachment, in *The Elusive Corporal*, is really betrayal, the point being that the corporal and Balloch (like Octave in the recalcitrant bearskin) are stuck in their skins. In the character of Balloch, complete self-detachment is identified with death. *The Elusive Corporal* suggests that of the various kinds of boundaries that manifest themselves in Renoir's work—social, economic, governmental, artistic, natural—the most inflexible is finally the self.

This sense of locked-in natures is strongest and most persuasive in *The Elusive*

Corporal, intentionally weakest in perhaps *The Golden Coach*. It's strong in individual characters like the tragically lovesick Muffat and the comically lovesick Georges in *Nana*; in Legrand's wife in *La Chienne*, who in her perpetual querulousness is like a W. C. Fields nemesis/wife; in Dédé of course, who is introduced, without the capsule descriptions given Legrand and Lulu in the prologue, as 'just plain Dédé, nothing more'; in Boudu, the constant in the variable of environment, who, like the corporal, adapts, but only superficially; in Emma in *Madame Bovary* (1934); in the characters in *Toni* (1935); in Batala in *Lange*, who even in the inhibiting company of a priest can barely check his gravitational pull toward random passing females; in the actor and the landlord in *The Lower Depths*; in of course Rauffenstein in *La Grande Illusion*, whose struggle to extricate himself from his overcoat in one scene may have given Renoir the idea for Octave's problems with the bear suit in *La Règle du Jeu*; in Lantier and Roubaud in *La Bête Humaine*; in Jurieu and Schumacher, dependably gloomy figures in *La Règle du Jeu*; in the possessive Mrs. Mory

in *This Land is Mine*; in Devers in *The Southerner* (1945); in the valet Joseph in *Diary of a Chambermaid*; in the one-track, marriage-minded baker's boy in *French Cancan*, and in the principals of *The Elusive Corporal*.

These are the 'closed' characters in Renoir. There's little or no sense of fluctuation, indecision, doubt or the possibility of change in them. They're generally humourless. They're stuck on love, themselves, or in their social roles. Dédé, Boudu and Batala would stagnate if they ran out of energy but, miraculously, they don't. They never wind down (by themselves). Each is, figuratively as well as literally, one and only one person, as at the other extreme Camilla, in her theatrical and non-theatrical roles, is many persons (and Harriet, in *The River*, is almost literally two persons—the girl we see and the woman we hear).

Among the most 'open' characters in Renoir are also Legrand at the end of *La Chienne*; the playboy Meunier, Jr., in *Lange*, who's open to anything; the baron in *The Lower Depths*; Pierre Renoir's Louis XVI in *La Marseillaise* (1938);

'French Cancan': Danglard (Jean Gabin) caught up in the dance



Octave and, in an odd way, La Chesnaye, who, as master of ceremonies in *La Règle du Jeu*, wants to be all things to all people, but can't quite; and 'Le Roi d'Yvetot', who, in *The Little Theatre*, achieves a detached involvement in a *ménage à trois*. These are the characters who are most adaptable—to situations, settings, people. They aren't split personalities, but one can see Renoir's interest in single and dual natures fatefully attracting him to the artificial splitting of one-track characters like Lantier (and his hereditary curse) in *La Bête Humaine*, Burnett (and his war trauma) in *Woman on the Beach* and Cordelier (and his evil alter ego Opale) in *Dr. Cordelier*. And it's not surprising that Jekyll-and-Hyde references occasionally pop up in the American films—Mory's 'We're all two people' in *This Land is Mine*, Butler's 'Each man possesses a split personality' in *Woman on the Beach*.

La Chesnaye, in *La Règle du Jeu*, has a unique rapport with each of the other characters, although it's more genuine in some cases—Marceau, Octave, Schumacher, Corneille—than in others—his wife Christine, his mistress Geneviève, Jurieu. If Octave is the film's natural chameleon, La Chesnaye is the professional chameleon. But he isn't always putting on an act. He really has an openness of character. Honesty and artificiality, spontaneity and rigidity, thrive side by side in the film, and most notably and vividly in La Chesnaye. (Thanks in part to Marcel Dalio's consummate performance.) This surprising openness, or detached involvement, in so socially circumscribed a character is what gives the conversations between Marceau the poacher and La Chesnaye their uncanny charm. These conversations suggest, tantalisingly, 'We're all the same!' (In Renoir's American films like *Woman on the Beach* and *Diary of a Chambermaid*, such suggestions are crudely spelled out in dialogue of the 'We're two of a kind—both rotten' sort.)

In *The Lower Depths* the baron's casual attitude towards class has a galvanising effect on Pépél, which Renoir wittily characterises in two apparently unrelated scenes: in the opening sequence, the reprimanded baron sits down abruptly and offers his startled superior, the minister, a cigarette from his case. Later, Pépél, arrested for stealing the baron's cigarette case and bronze, is released when the baron arrives and informs the commissaire that they were gifts between friends. Upon which revelation, Pépél triumphantly offers the floundering commissaire a cigarette from the magical case. Such felicitous conjunctions of diverse natures make barriers of class and self seem to disappear. They're like a form of creativity, a conjuring up of something out of apparently nothing. In *The River* it's (a bit unbelievably) the stiff Captain John who says he thinks that 'with every person you meet who is important to you, you either die a little or are born.' Pépél believes that he can, with Natacha's help, become 'un autre homme'. But the barriers remain. As Renoir puts it in his novel: 'self comes rushing back.'

Renoir's open characters like Octave and La Chesnaye are ultimately subject to the same limits as the closed characters like Batala and the corporal, or the intermediate characters like Boieldieu and Christine—



'Une Partie de Campagne': the river as a recurring theme

this is the sense of *La Règle du Jeu* and of *The Elusive Corporal* in particular, as it is of Renoir's work in general. Detachment is illusory, imperfect or at best impermanent. Legrand in *La Chienne* can stand back and direct the reconciliation between the sergeant and his wife. But he cries 'Ah, freedom, Lulu!' too soon, just before he's plunged back into the role of actor, and into that stickiest of all situations, the triangle. The baron, after gambling his money away, also stands back, watching an ex-girl friend waltz off across the dance floor with a new partner. But traces of bitterness in Jouvet's features and voice suggest that there's a stronger element of coercion in the baron's relinquishment of life than he generally lets on. The prince, in a similar situation in *French Cancan*, at first sits still in the great chair watching Nini go off with Danglard—then promptly attempts to shoot himself. Danglard's time backstage in the chair underscores his detachment as creator from his creation. But he's soon back in the greater musical-comedy-drama out front, like Legrand and Octave, caught up in the dance, an actor and a spectator again, and like La Chesnaye with his unruly guests and servants, powerless to 'stop the farce' once it's set in motion.

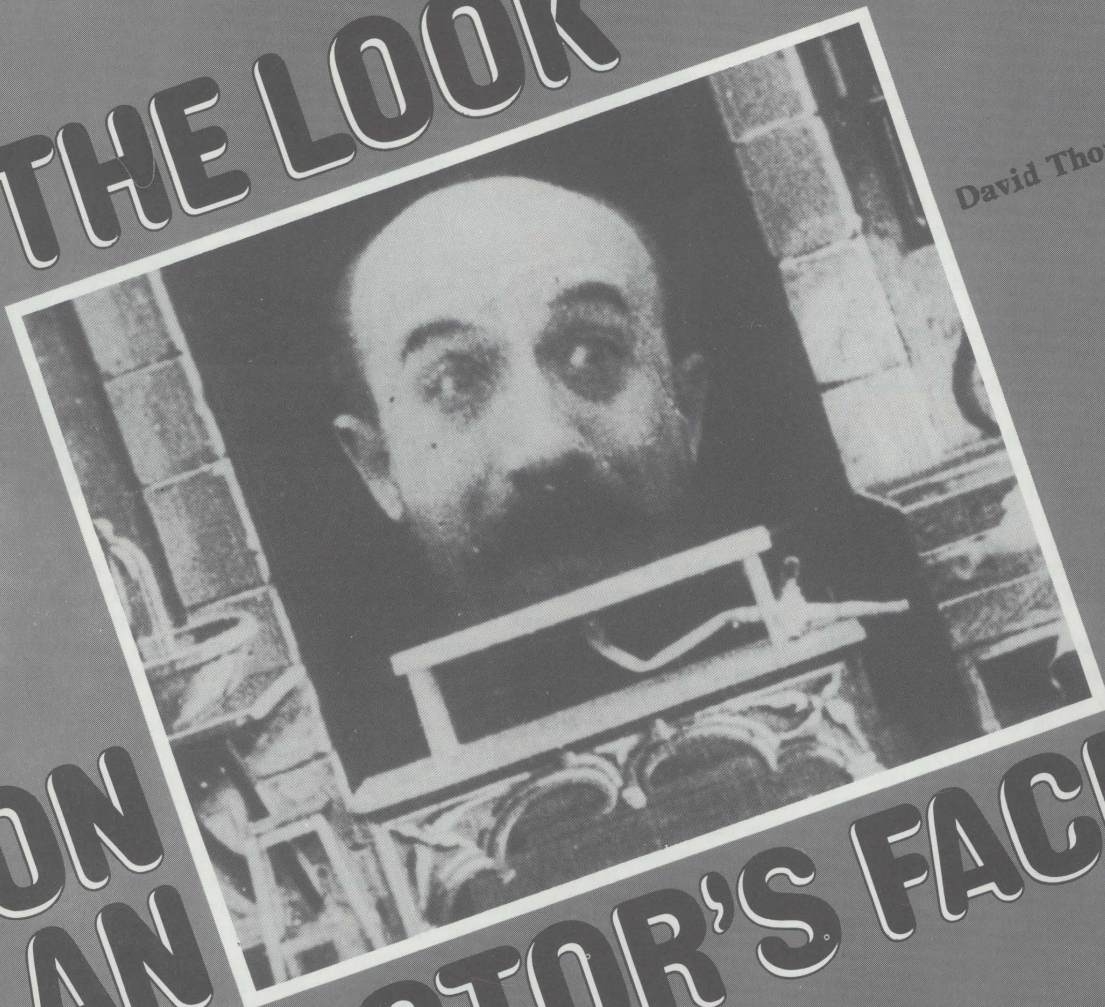
The headlong choreographic movement of *La Règle du Jeu* and *The Golden Coach*, like the perpetual motion of the elusive corporal, or the river in *The River*, is the context for Renoir's characters. His greatest films have a common basis in their evocation of an irresistible life force, at once centrifugal and centripetal, or isolating and integrating, against which detachment is finally powerless. Even detachment can ultimately neither isolate one from society—e.g., the baron, Nana, Legrand, Danglard—nor fully integrate one into it—Pépél and Natacha, Octave, La Chesnaye. Whatever the particular, personal tendency—towards independence or interdependence—it's checked by an 'equal and opposing' force. Perfect detachment, perfect harmony, is impossible. In *La Chienne*, Dédé's insularity, Lulu's puppy-like devotion to him, her duplicity with Legrand and Legrand's own machina-

tions all help to set the splintering mechanism in motion. The characters are conspirators in their own comedy/tragedy/melodrama, both self- and other-entangled. They are at once masters and victims of fate, as Renoir so beautifully understates it when Dédé drives up before Lulu's apartment, after Legrand has killed her and fled. The street is on an incline, and a crowd of people listening to some street singers block his way. Dédé honks, and his car imperially parts them as it glides into the frame at an angle, going downhill, and stops. He orders some kids out of his way as he steps out of the car and through the crowd. His manner, as he makes his way back through the crowd after discovering Lulu's body, is less imperial. Lost and in a daze, he mechanically steps into his car and starts it. But it seems less his actions now than the car's gravitational momentum that carries him down and away, out of the fixed frame.

The seemingly autonomous action of the car in *La Chienne* is like the mute insert of the too handy paper cutter just before the murder, or the crane from Legrand up to the cuckoo clock. It's the visual equivalent of the phonographs, pianos, nickel-odeons and violins that keep interrupting and impinging on the characters, figuratively taking over from them, as the player piano in *La Règle du Jeu* literally takes over for—of course—the 'Danse Macabre', the dance of death. Renoir's characters can start the music/farce/drama, but they can't stop it. The aural and visual motifs in *La Chienne* like the car's momentum have their counterparts in Renoir's other films: the tracking shot up to Nana in *Nana*, the wind and rain in *La Nuit du Carrefour* (1932), the river in *Boudu*, *Partie de Campagne* and *The River*, the train in *Toni* and *La Bête Humaine*, the forward motion of *La Règle du Jeu* and *The Golden Coach*, the climactic cancan in *French Cancan*, the shepherd's flute in *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*, the shock close shot of the corporal in *The Elusive Corporal*. The same processes of flow and flux are at work in all Renoir's films, 'pinning' the characters, implicating them all in life.

THE LOOK

David Thomson



ON AN ACTOR'S FACE

1. Actors are not like other people—or rather, the people who appear on movie screens are not the same as other people. (And anyone who appears on a movie screen—Charles Laughton or a face in a Wiseman film—becomes an actor.) It is a pity, for it interferes with film's desire to be realistic and to be true. But it is a fact none the less, and one that cinema has always guessed. As early as 1901, in *L'Homme à la tête de caoutchouc*, Méliès illustrated a strange capacity that makes film's creatures unlike us—their heads grow larger and smaller during their stories. It is usually a response to excitement or danger, like a skunk exuding its identifying smell or a chameleon merging with the background.

2. Watching these faces prepares one for degrees of reality and deception. On American TV, in spring 1977, there was an advertisement that began with the scene from *The Shootist* in which John Wayne's elderly gunfighter is told by James Stewart M.D. that he has cancer. Nothing about the

image seemed suspicious, except Wayne's hangdog moustache. Then a cut, and Wayne was leaning against a desk, in a modern suit, shaved, telling us that some years ago he had played that scene for 'real'. But he'd been lucky. Would we send money to continue the fight against cancer? (Would we defend the Alamo with him, or get that herd to Missouri?) The entire presentation smacked of the unsound—that office somewhat glib, the summer suit too good to be true, and Wayne staring straight into the camera. I recall lengthy films in which Wayne contrived never to look into the lens—*Rio Bravo*, where he watched Dean Martin like a friend, and Angie Dickinson as if she might bite. Wasn't Angie lovely then, before the stress of having to masquerade as a prostitute every week in *Police Woman*, loosening a vice ring to stay in the ratings? She was beautiful, but more appealing still in publicity pictures taken on the *Rio Bravo* set—her hair different, wearing tights and a leotard, and draped on a Mitchell. In those pictures one

can smell the excitement of a girl getting her big break. How the still makes one long to see a documentary on the making of *Rio Bravo*. Angie is so blatant in those stills that she seems restrained in the movie. Did she miss her opportunity, at the very moment she took it?

3. The people in films have, or once had, a reality measurable in ways other than the imprint they left in an emulsion of silver salts which, when developed, printed and projected, makes them not just recognisable, but a guarantee of themselves. The image is accepted as a coin-like representation of the person: when you pay Elizabeth Taylor a million dollars you get her picture—she comes to the studio and hands it over to the camera, with degrees of grace, animation and interest. The audience, in turn, will pay the ticket price to see that

Above: 'A fact that the cinema has always guessed . . . ' Méliès' 'The Man with the Indiarubber Head' (1901)



'Rio Bravo': Angie Dickinson. '... the excitement of a girl getting her big break'

image rendered, knowing it is her. An extraordinary look-alike—one to confound Burtons and Todd—would not satisfy them, if the substitution were admitted.

In other words, where a star is concerned, and the viewer is involved in the financial and psychic transactions of professional cinema, we trust provenance and the good faith of the system. The traditional appearance of Jack Nicholson will open us to all that is and has been Nicholson, like the unique combination releasing a lock. The cinema is about appearance, but stardom is a matter of consistent appearance—the same person and personality must turn up with Nicholson's face, whatever the inconvenience.

4. The audience want their confidence repaid; they yearn for reliability. But the audience is demented, for they mix the satisfied recognition of Clint Eastwood with the pretence that he is someone else—Rowdy Yates, the Man With No Name (poetic divination of the actor's wandering life), Dirty Harry, Coogan, Josey Wales—whatever. The glory of the star can rise to such a pitch—Eastwood is one of the few people to ensure huge audiences today, regardless of circumstances—that television decides to make a documentary about Eastwood. Documentary is a form in which Eastwood again allows himself to be photographed—the same cameras, the same film-stock, part of the same light—but now claims to be Eastwood. It is passably interesting, but he has no magnums, no brutal quips, he does not shoot other men in the crotch or drive into liquor stores; he is altogether less convincing and emphatic. Actors are 'resting' when they are not working, and they sometimes disclose the emptiness that drives them in search of pretend people.

5. The actor's protestation of a real self, with rights to privacy, is not very happy or persuasive. His fame and his standard of living depend upon being seen: all actors—not only movie actors, though their plight is gravest—run the risk of not existing

when they are not seen. Thus the personal lives of great screen personalities have often been an appalling but absorbing extension of their pictured life—and invariably there is an affinity between their screen characters and the way they are treated in fan magazines and the popular press. James Dean was killed in a car crash, whereas in *Rebel Without a Cause* he had just managed to escape the car before it went over the cliff. Gary Cooper was so pained and decent a man on the screen that Warner Brothers, his then employers, put pressure on him to break off an extra-marital affair with actress Patricia Neal, even though their longing is credible, urgent and touching in a Warners film, *The Fountainhead*, where Patricia in a silken bed dreams of and is superimposed on by Gary labouring in a stone quarry—the brilliant architect in the wilderness, probing her soul with his rock-drill.

6. With Cooper the dilemma is acute, for he, above all, is the screen star treasured and enjoyed for 'being himself'; not lunging this way and that into diverse 'parts'; not equipped or trained with the ploys and guile of a stage actor. But a regular fellow who happened in front of the cameras and turned shy but winning. It is pretty to think so, and a large part of Cooper's aura of integrity—he never played a liar or a scoundrel, and only once (in *Bright Leaf*, a film about the early history of cigarettes) was he even prone to brooding, pride or unkindness, all corrected in the end as he abandons Patricia Neal (once more) for Lauren Bacall. Cooper elsewhere is upright, brave, restrained. When young he was sheer, handsome and amused by the world. But he was not articulate, and he was vulnerable—thus his commercial strength and eloquence relied on sheepishness and his innocence being threatened by unscrupulous men. In time, cancer eroded face, confidence and gesture, and there was an effect of agony in hanging on to honour. But who else made the perils and difficulties of being 'good' so compelling—in *A Farewell to Arms*, *The Plainsman*, *Mr Deeds Goes to Town*, *Ball of Fire*, *Sergeant York*, *Cloak and Dagger*, *High Noon*, *The Court Martial of Billy Mitchell*, *Friendly Persuasion*, *Man of the West*?

7. Was Gary Cooper therefore 'good'? Or Frank J. Cooper? Was there so little alteration in stepping before the cameras that those placid machines recorded his nature? The uncertain theory of screen acting is involved here. Silent cinema may have been most barbarous and restricted in the ways it approached acting. Partly to convey plot, and partly in debt to Victorian melodrama, it established over-acting (signal acting) as an idiom; in so many silent films, the players are such aggressive mimes of the story that they have no presence—the signalling is so vital that anyone could be doing it. They are not merely photographed, but photographed in the act of telling the story.

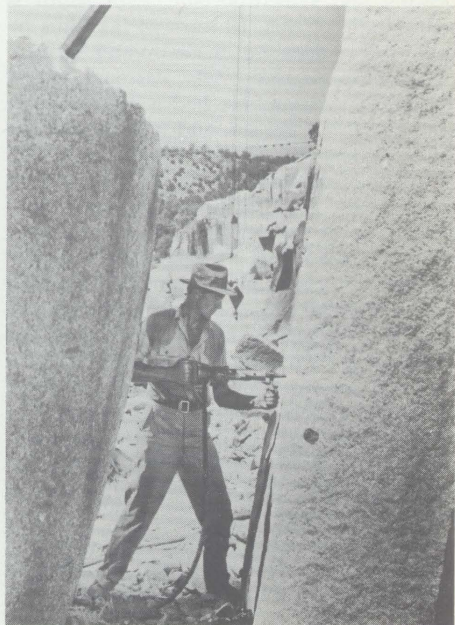
Only occasionally—with Louise Brooks, say, or Falconetti—do we look into the face and mind of someone to whom the story is happening. But there are enough of those moments to indicate the potential

of seeing and being seen in movies—when an actress may have been asked by a director to do no more than imagine the thoughts a character might be having and then pretend to be unaware of the camera two feet from her introspective face. This is the great lie movie actors perpetrate, and it explains why they have such an elusive identity: they portray sincerity through a trick—they have enlarged the range of dishonesty—they have spoiled candour for all of us, turning it into a style.

8. Sound had many consequences. It out-flanked girls prettier than Jean Hagen and with less raucous voices than she puts on in *Singin' in the Rain*; it created a demand for actors who could speak clearly, whose faces were not tortured by the burden of dialogue—thus the stage provided many stars of the 30s: Tracy, Bette Davis, Katharine Hepburn, Edward G. Robinson, Cagney, Bogart, the Marx Brothers, Mae West, Fonda, Stewart, Margaret Sullivan, Cary Grant. But it transformed the narrative status of cinema. Stories need not be mimed, and once that clutter did not have to be *shown*, so much more could be *seen*. Movies have seldom dealt in complicated or non-traditional stories, and short conversations can usually make the arrangements. This quickens the pace of all movies—which is why sound pictures seem more dense. More important, it leaves the actors with time to do nothing, time to think and feel and be. Thus, with sound, we discover the depths of those people who will consent to being filmed in reverie, without coyness or acting up—people 'the camera loves'—people who will 'be themselves', or empty vessels into which the fantasies of millions of viewers can plunge. The screen face is a pool and we are swimmers in it. Sound released both the actor and the spectator: technical advance in another quarter actually clarified the essential harmony of seeing and being seen.

9. Nevertheless, 'theatrical' acting was often uncomfortable in movies. A Hepburn or a Tracy might have been able to dominate a stage, but their virtue on screen rested

'The Fountainhead': Gary Cooper in the stone quarry





Cagney in 'Kiss Tomorrow Goodbye': '... that terse, vibrant body required the full shot.' Olivier in *Rebecca*: '... those alarmed, nearly sinister eyes'



in their exact instinct for the proper pitch and carry to charm a camera. The camera is easily bullied, and then those watching its image wince and retract. Cagney is known as a boisterous, flamboyant screen personality, but he accomplished that with such delicacy and restraint that we lean forward to look closer: he draws us unto himself. (It should be added that different types of shot suit different actors. Cagney was not often filmed in close-up: that terse, vibrant body required the full shot, within which the face was not lost but not overpowering. Subtler faces—such as Grant's, Cooper's or Garbo's—lend themselves to the close-up by virtue of reticence.)

10. Not many stage actors who went to Hollywood returned to the theatre—Henry Fonda is a notable exception. As a result, theatrical circles scorned screen acting: it seduced and wasted talent; it conspired in an absurd, undignified cult of personality; it insisted on coarse material; it made no searching demands of actors—the 'finest Hamlet of his time', John Barrymore, ended as a sour ham in pictures; Gary Cooper, it was charged, could never have managed a part on a stage—might not have learned the lines, let alone projected them. The Barrymore case is instructive: perhaps a great stage Hamlet will discover that he is a fake on film. Stage earnestness has not been respected by the camera. One strain of 'great acting' has never adjusted its range and so seems calculating, overbearing and self-important. Paul Muni is an example of this. In most of his films he preferred to dress up, make up and 'gesture up' as someone else—Zola, Pasteur, Juarez, a Chinese peasant. He had a high opinion of himself and his art, and it followed that only 'lofty' parts were worthy of him. We could not forget that we were watching an incautiously great actor—something more acceptable in the theatre, where the man presents his body as a token of good faith—because you could hit him in the face with a soft tomato you are more respectful of him. But on screen, Muni's histrionics are exhausting evidence of a show-off: even a *tour de force* such as the one-shot coverage of Zola's speech in court is an ordeal. We are watching an actor doggedly confident that he is someone else, and thus oblivious of the greater intrigue of being several people at the same time.

Other hams concede this, with benefits. *Twentieth Century* would not be possible without Barrymore's good-humoured pleasure at mocking his own reputation. Orson

Welles conjures with confession and charlatanry. And Laurence Olivier...? Olivier is 'our greatest actor', a lord, let alone a knight, accepting honours Harold Wilson declined. Yet how little sense we have of his nature. Instead, he is hidden, shy, intelligent, master of effects, unrivalled at the lifelike, but always someone else. Some of his most famous parts—Archie Rice, Richard III, Othello—are reminiscent of Muni. He lacked the warmth required for grand romantic parts—Heathcliff or Henry V. But over the years those alarmed, nearly sinister eyes have helped explain several chilly intellectuals unable to come into the open—Maxim de Winter, Mr Darcy, Nelson, Hamlet. Still, on screen, Olivier is like a Kafka character, an observing presence denied humanity. He is not a million miles from Cary Grant, except that he has never risked comedy or the peril of being laughed at. Grant can be cold, haughty and detached—*Notorious*, *Only Angels Have Wings* and *People Will Talk* employ this form of insecurity—but never without a sign of tension in himself that also leads to the exquisite grace that is willing to be made a fool of—the learned idiots in *Bringing Up Baby* and *Monkey Business*, the harrowed hard-on in *I Was a Male War Bride*.

11. Why is Olivier never funny? Is it a ridiculous question when he is so austere and dominant? Or could it be that monotony of screen personality betrays reluctance to ride the medium's treacherous shifts, ignorance even of the entire range of emotions? Something in film is humiliating for the actor, and not all of them can digest it. Olivier, I think, suffers from excessive dignity—it shows as caution, pride and the ingrowing darkness that smothers laughter. (In contrast, Gielgud and Richardson now seem richer men—less forceful perhaps, more dotty, but likely to break out laughing

Joan Crawford in *Mildred Pierce*: 'the face was unrelenting and the anguish steady.' Jack Benny in *To Be Or Not To Be*



as they begin 'To be or not...' Indeed, how could anyone be so solemn with that speech after Jack Benny endured a spectator leaving on its cue? In one swoop, Hamlet became the clown, so that Olivier's version, six years later, is so heartfelt and gloomy as to be humourless. The actor who avoids humiliation may end up looking ridiculous; pratfall could be the surest mark of dignity.) Humphrey Bogart is historically secure now as Sam Spade, Philip Marlowe and the droll guy Bacall taught to whistle. As such, he exemplifies man's romantic concept of his own grace under pressure—tough but understanding, amusing but astute, brave but not cocky. We all love the legend, and it is likely that Bogart also cherished it. Playing it allowed him to think he was that sort of guy—why should he not share in the illusion of millions? That may explain why, after 1940, he is at ease with the camera, whereas before then, as villains, he was conventional, on edge, unconvincing whether snarling or begging for mercy. Did he shrink from being bad? Did it outrage his self-respect? Could the span of an actor be the extent of the man's character?

12. Once again, the enquiry knocks against the awkward possibility that screen acting is inseparable from the personality of the actor; that in allowing the camera to explore him he is revealed. Awkward? Yes, for it leaves film appreciation in the area of possible libel. When we write of Joan Crawford are we discussing an otherwise neutral woman's professional masquerade, or glimpses of herself that a life in films allowed? Those rueful eyes stared out of every film—the face was unrelenting and the anguish steady. Were we seeing fictions, played by an actress, or covert documentaries of a star, discreetly phrased as 'stories'?

Certainly the stars are more the subjects than the instruments of their films. It is not too fanciful, it may even be useful, to suggest that, less than filmed stories, they are elaborate 'home movies' of wealthy, glamorous celebrities who enjoyed pretending to be other people, and who were so interested in themselves that they furnished extensive visual records of their games. But not *ciné-vérité*; *ciné-mensonge* might be a better label. Lying activates the form. It is there in the assumed names, the make-believe circumstances, the heavy, refined finish to every image (wiping away reality's untidiness) and in that refusal to admit that you are being filmed, so that the private distress of *Mildred Pierce* is a sham, ignoring a battery of lights and equipment and the avid voyeurism of maybe fifty technicians.



But film-making does condone voyeurism: the crew is allowed to watch since later, it is hoped, millions will follow suit. Movies pander to voyeurism, and what is more titillating than to be told in advance that, for this or that intimate scene, the set was cleared? What does 'cleared' mean, when movie is the deliberate exhibitionism of attractive people in extreme situations? They turn a blind eye so that we may watch.

13. A story, told by George Cukor to Gavin Lambert, about the making of *A Star is Born* and a scene involving Judy Garland, or Vicky Lester, or Esther Blodgett, or Frances Gumm. It comes after the suicide of James Mason, when she is too depressed to resume her public life. Before the first take, Cukor whispers to Garland: 'You know what this is about. You really know this.' Imagine Judy's pinched face hearing that: me, I am being mined, film by film, no wonder there is less of me, or what there is is so raddled.



Cukor and Judy Garland: 'will it cut together, or will it only cut Judy to the quick'

They film, and Cukor described how Tommy Noonan 'chides her about not giving in to herself, he even gets deliberately rough with her—and she loses her head. She gets up and screams like someone out of control, maniacal and terrifying! And when Judy Garland did this, it was *absolutely* terrifying! She had no concern with what she looked like, she went much further than I'd expected, and I thought it was great. But I was also scared that the actor (Noonan) might be thrown because of this tremendous impact on him. Not at all, he stayed right with her, at one moment he even grabbed her and she tried to get away. (You have to be careful about moments like that, they mustn't be rehearsed or slick, and they mustn't be too goddamned much. But this was exactly right, an ugly, awkward, desperate scuffle.) So he grabbed her and held her and spoke his next lines with great force and energy. The lines were meant to shame her—and her reaction was unforgettable. She turned around, and you saw that all the anger and madness and fear had disappeared. Her face looked very vulnerable and tender, there were tears in her eyes.'

Cukor did another take quickly, in case of technical problems, and then told Judy she had really scared him. How should Judy

react, having shown herself, a self not more tranquil for being used, and being told she was fearsome? She laughed and said, 'Oh, that's nothing. Come over to my house any afternoon. I do it every afternoon... But I only do it *once* at home.'

14. When Judy writhed and screamed to order, who could predict which way she would turn? If a woman is asked to mesh her own tangled nervous system with the tidy construct of a fabricated movie star—Judy and Vicky Go Boating—can we expect her to hit every chalk-mark precisely? No, that would be callous to her exploited sentiments. (Similarly, theatre audiences were hushed when Judy stumbled in a song, for they had at least won the most treasured moment: when the human wreck stepped out of the glittering performer.) But if Judy is in spasm, where should Cukor put the camera? If Judy is going to offer up this vital, shuddering part of herself, like Linda Blair vomiting the devil, is it not more important to cover, record or *get* that rare moment than to be sure it is composed correctly, seen from the most pregnant angle? Will it cut together, or will it only cut Judy to the quick? Yet the director, it is said, is the man who chooses what we see and how we see it. The element of style in the cinema hangs upon the manner of seeing and being seen. Stories and actors recur ceaselessly in movies: choice and personality consist of the way different directors observe these things. It is in documentary, or more strictly newsreel, that the action is so sudden, once-and-only or dangerous, and the cameraman so powerless, that it is enough to bring back an image, any image—of the flying saucer landing or a volcano erupting. A volcano in flower, or an actress in crisis—two phenomena that thrust responsibility on the camera operator and leave the director an awed onlooker with his fingers crossed. In those cases is the actor not author of the moment, superseding the decisiveness of the camera?

15. The last stronghold of humanism in us says that films ought to deal with people, just as photographs of human beings are natural and decent while the prettiest studies of trees, reflections and shapes seem oppressive. Furthermore, for every claim that the movies came of age with theatrical length, sustained stories, directors' ambitions and more fluent technique—*The Birth of a Medium* theory—it is possible that what grabbed the vast audience, and what made film-going a habit, was the chance to see people—the stars. Charlie, Doug and Mary—three of the United Artists were three of the best known faces in the world. Ever since then, the preponderance of picture-goers have been drawn to look at people, and to the extent that they conceive of films having authors they attribute them to the stars.

Nor are they wrong: the vehicle thunders on, even under disguise. It would be impossible to imagine *Camille* or *Queen Christina* without Garbo; history and Dumas have been bent to her shape and mood. But that landmark of new cinema, *Citizen Kane*, is just as thoroughly dependent on Orson Welles. Nearer to our time, *East of Eden* turns on James Dean, and *One Flew Over*

the Cuckoo's Nest would have collapsed without Jack Nicholson. There are fewer stars now, but there are fewer films. We still cherish those who remain: American cinema's renaissance after 1967 cannot be assessed properly unless one heeds the contribution of Nicholson, Warren Beatty, Robert De Niro, Gene Hackman and—one level down—Robert Duvall, Bruce Dern, Harvey Keitel.

16. Moreover, many directors own up to loving 'their' actors and actresses. They marry them, sleep with them or caress them with the camera. I tried, in *American Film* (November, 1976), to propose a first list of films based on a director's, a producer's or a cameraman's love for an actress. It was enough of a list to make one wonder whether it is possible to finish a watchable film without that sort of fondness reaching across the camera. 'Fond' need not imply sexual association; but as the camera does worship when it photographs, and since the person filmed must yield to the instrument, surely trust and a degree of love are necessary? Many directors like to use the same players over and over again: Griffith, Bergman, Warhol, Altman, Cassavetes, Renoir, Godard, Hawks—all of whom are credited with either a 'stock



'The Big Sleep': Bogart in the bookshop

company', palpable friendliness wrapping the camera, or a sense of 'family' out of which films emerge. And they have paid their various tributes to the thrill of filming people:

Warhol: 'The people are beautiful.'

Hawks: 'The main idea was to try and make every scene fun to look at. A place where Bogey was to walk into a book store I said, "This is an awfully ordinary scene. Can't you think of something to do?" And he just pushed up his hat brim, put on glasses and got a little effeminate. The moment he did that, I said, "O.K. come on, we're off, I'll write some new dialogue when we're inside."'

Renoir: 'I don't want the movements of the actors to be determined by the camera, but the movements of the camera to be determined by the actor.'

17. Renoir's point testifies to how far the most liberated, humane and tolerant of styles is at the service of the people in his films. No question but that Renoir's urge to move the camera and let it run results in a spatial and social continuity—we see depth and we see all the relationships between characters. But surely the style comes from the wish not to dictate to people—both the

actors and the characters they play—and to allow the actors to discover the characters. The style permits everyone their reasons and their rights, and just contains the flux of comedy, disaster and turmoil when those reasons conflict, as in the climax of *La Règle du Jeu*.

Renoir learned to be involved with his actors and actresses from seeing how his father painted the members of his household. Jean would tease and play with some actors, be sympathetic and serious with others; some liked a comprehensive script, others responded to the challenge of improvisation. And Renoir allowed that if you employed the face and body of a person, inevitably you made inroads on their own nature. In *La Règle du Jeu*, those demands were so sharp, the film so busy and the moods so volatile, that the director could not stay behind the camera. He had to be nearer, to touch and encourage them, a part of the family and the one most hurt at the end, when he looks as distraught as someone who has just seen the film.

18. On *La Règle du Jeu*, Renoir consciously went beyond the norms of casting in asking Marcel Dalio to play La Chesnaye: Dalio had been used to raffish gangsters, but Renoir picked him because he was 'exactly the opposite of the "cliché" of a marquis.' See the film today and Dalio is one of its pillars, the most mercurial and evasive person in the film, longing for life to be as disciplined as his mechanical toys.

So what is casting? Is there such a thing as type-casting? Theatre people disparage movies for their stereotypes, and the assumption of roles does differ in the two media. Actors 'create' parts in the theatre: for instance, Barbara Loden first played the girl in Arthur Miller's *After the Fall*, but that left scope for Faye Dunaway in the television production and I can think of several other actresses I would like to see attempting it—Tuesday Weld, Margaret Sullivan, or Marilyn Monroe? Stage parts are like concertos—they are supple, lofty and impersonal enough to take on all comers. But parts in films live only briefly: like virginity, once taken, they are not there to be inhabited again. Before shooting, all manner of choices may perplex the film-makers and keep the part blurred: Kim Novak's part(s) in *Vertigo* were designed for Vera Miles; Shirley Temple was first choice to play Dorothy in *The Wizard of Oz*—imagine how 'Over the Rainbow' might have been cosy and wistful, instead of the epitome of heartbreaking dreams; Henry Fonda could not fathom the nature of Howard Beale in *Network*, thus that disjointed film had the extra oddity of an Australian as an American household god.

Fonda, I think, could not have ranted at the people; he might have reasoned, as he did in *Twelve Angry Men*—the light would have ridden less crazily on his gentle voice. *Network* would have had a different tone. Yet, now, Beale is Peter Finch, with the eerie enforcement that, months after playing the prophet who ends his tirades by feigning collapse, Finch himself dropped dead. The theory of type-casting is due to the persistence of stars. But it is less rigid and enclosing than the fact that once a film is made no one else can play the part. The part does not



'Monkey Business': Cary Grant, Ginger Rogers.
'Grant is too secure to be quite the victim . . .'

exist until one actor realises it. Then it is gone for ever. No remake brings it back. Lear or Hedda Gabler speak the same speeches, but the text in movies is the appearance.

19. All credit then to Andrew Sarris (*American Film*, May 1977) for indicating the waste in arguing over Vivien Leigh or Merle Oberon in Wyler's *Wuthering Heights*. And yet . . . the critic can usefully learn things about film through such speculations. Let us test a few films by a director who controls his players in the finest details, who designs his pictures beyond alteration and who, with the insolence that passes for teasing, has called actors cattle. If *Vertigo* had had Vera Miles then the girl might have been as near to breakdown as the wife in *The Wrong Man*, and not the numb pawn of the plot that makes Novak pathetic and touching. Suppose Cary Grant had been the detective, then vertigo would become an annoying weakness 'I should really get over' and not the abyss at James Stewart's feet. Grant is too secure to be quite the victim made of Stewart. But play Grant as the photographer in *Rear Window*, and the nocturnal spying becomes more cold-blooded, more the sport of curiosity cut off from compassion. Go several steps further and imagine Raymond Burr as the laid-up photographer—wheelchairs awaited him—

and Thelma Ritter as the wife forced to go out to work—selling ties perhaps? Then Grant could be the killer over the way (the object of *Suspicion*), coming to the window in the absent-mindedness that tries to start *Monkey Business* before the credits have had time to elapse. Or—think how sentimental *Kane* might be if Spencer Tracy had been the tycoon. That is useful if only to show how little conventional feeling the film has.

20. But Kane's solitude owes something to his having only Orson Welles to talk to—the part and the player are in a state of symbiosis, like Jekyll and Hyde, the double act that predicts so much of the terror and ecstasy of acting. And loneliness is crucial to the movie actor. It is in Garbo flinching from fame; and it is in the mind of anyone who knows he will be consumed by millions he will never meet. Films offer the possibility of intense, intricate passages between the actor and the character whereby both become unlike real or fictitious people, but with allegiances to both. The look on an actor's face knows he is being watched, but tells the white lie that no one is there.

Not the worst way of coming closer to the mystery of screen personality and reading the ambiguous look on an actor's face is to consider the special thrall of those scenes where an actor is alone on the screen. For us, it is like being alone at last with a lover, able to move in and out without inhibition—Dana Andrews exploring Laura's apartment, dreaming her into being; James Stewart in *Vertigo*, tracking Kim Novak and being drawn into the trap; Gene Hackman in *The Conversation*, listening to the world; David Hemmings in *Blow-Up*, solving the riddle of his pictures; and Robert De Niro, in *Taxi Driver*, stricken by paranoia and whirling round on the camera and us—'Are you talking to me? You must be, 'cause I'm the only one here.' At such moments, another symbiosis is exposed, between us and the actor, for we eavesdrop and spy on them, like Stewart in *Rear Window*. The look on an actor's face is the thought in our mind. ■

'The Conversation': 'Gene Hackman . . . listening to the world'



A remarkable source for film historians has recently been unearthed by Jonathan Lewis and Elizabeth Taylor-Mead of Metropolis Pictures, in the course of research for their film *Before Hindsight*. Contacts had suggested that the archive of the pre-war Film and Photo League might still be in the care of its former Secretary, the Reverend Hugh Cuthbertson, and in September 1976 Metropolis acquired some ninety reels of 16mm silent film in varying stages of decay, along with two file boxes of relevant documentation, which Mr. Cuthbertson had collected over the last thirty years. As we know (*SIGHT AND SOUND*, Spring 1977), sections of film from the F.P.L. collection have been cleared for use in *Before Hindsight*; but Hugh Cuthbertson died tragically before confirming the ultimate destination of his collection, or giving much information about its acquisition.

Bert Hogenkamp (*SIGHT AND SOUND*, Spring 1976) has already had the opportunity of describing some of these 'lost' films of the 1930s from contemporary secondary sources. Now an account can be given of the archive as a primary source for historians of British cinema and society.

The history of the Film and Photo League is a microcosm of left-wing politics in the 30s. The frequently self-destructive disension within the membership reflected only too accurately the inability of the wider political grouping to coalesce in a unified opposition to fascism. Characteristically, the seven-part sound documentary *Building the People's Front*, for which Cuthbertson appealed for film in June 1937, was never made, although plenty of pre-publicity was launched to try to generate interest. This is not to diminish the achievements of the League, which were considerable, given the constant state of near bankruptcy, the encroachment on its sphere of influence of fraternal organisations, and from 1936 to its demise in 1939 the imposition of all the over-bureaucratic administration on to one volunteer who would seem to have worked for his parishioners in his spare time.

The papers, which form only a tiny proportion of Hugh Cuthbertson's collection of labour history documents, give such insight into the circumstances surrounding each F.P.L. production that it is impossible to view the films without referring to the files. Although some of the letters are frustratingly addressed merely 'Dear Comrade', they do show what a wealth of information can be gleaned from the archives of an organisation which conducted its affairs before the heyday of the telephone.

The films are more cumbersome to study. Unfortunately not every F.P.L. production is represented—*Fight, Transport, Defence of Britain, Holiday from Unemployment* (on which 'P. Leacock' worked) and *Liverpool* are all missing. Trims, out-takes and unedited footage from F.P.L. productions or from films which were never made comprise fifty per cent of the collection. Although some rushes (such as those shot by Rudolph Messel in Edinburgh during the 1936 Hunger March) are exciting, there is little of value to the historian in these unidentified, shrunken and in some cases undeveloped 50 and 100 feet rolls.

Piecing together the reels which do form complete titled films involved recourse to the F.P.L. files and to the records of the six other major producers and distributors of left-wing films in the 30s: the Federation of Workers' Film Societies, the Workers' Film Association, the London Co-operative Society, the Progressive Film Institute, Kino Films and the Socialist Film Council. Between them, there were overlaps and exchanges of ideas, films and personnel. Even if the outbreak of war had not thrown

most of these organisations and often their film collections into disarray, it was inevitable that misunderstandings should arise as to who owned which film, both then and now.

The Workers' Film and Photo League was constituted in the summer of 1934 out of Kino's production group and the Workers' Camera Club. When Kino decided to form a conventional limited liability company to continue their distribution work (Kino Films (1935) Ltd.), the W.F.P.L. remained as Kino's ancillary production group until Kino revived its own production unit towards the end of 1935, when coincidentally the League dropped the prefix 'Workers'. In February 1936 it was proposed that the F.P.L. should merge back into Kino's production group, but by April 1936 it had been resolved that the League would continue as an independent organisation appealing to those generally interested in film and photography, and 'planning for the production of films of a definite social value.'

There are films in the F.P.L. archive from each of these periods in the League's chequered history, but most interestingly there are examples of left-wing films made before the League was formed, when it had been assumed that left-wing production had petered out (see Bert Hogenkamp, *SIGHT AND SOUND*, Spring 1976). From 1930–31 the F.O.W.F.S. had made three editions of *Workers' Topical News* on 35 mm stock. The earliest film in the F.P.L. archive, marked on the can 'Against Imperialist War—May Day 1932', is almost certainly a fourth in the series, mentioned in the *Daily Worker* of 24 February 1933 as having been shown at a meeting in Bethnal Green organised by the Friends of the *Daily Worker*. There is no identifying Atlas logo, the stock is 16 mm and the film is incomplete, but its style is indisputably that of a *Workers' Topical News*—the footage and titles lack the polemic of the later Kino and F.P.L. films, and there is a concentration on the conventionally newsworthy aspects of the gathering: a long shot of a formation flight of planes above the rally, a medium shot of a group of Chinese who wave at the camera and a close-up of sandwiches being handed out to hungry marchers.

In contrast, the second film, *London May 7th 1933*, is a rare example of grass roots propaganda, which appears from its physical condition and from related documents never to have been shown. The end titles are confused and incomplete, but the

Victoria
Wegg-Prosser

The Archive of the Film and Photo League

beginning asserts confidently, 'Despite the orders of the leaders, the workers are determined that all workers shall be allowed to march to Hyde Park thus showing a REAL United Front against the National Government and the Capitalists.'

By August 1934 the W.F.P.L. had acquired enough footage from unidentified sources to assemble the first *Workers' Newsreel*, which appeared under the Kino logo. The opening title, 'This is an attempt to present NEWS from the working class point of view', probably refers back to the 1933 Socialist Film Council production *What the Newsreel Does Not Show*, which opened 'This is an attempt by a group of Socialists to show the true picture of the world today.' (Copies of the extant S.F.C. films have also been obtained by Metropolis Pictures, and they substantiate the account given by Bert Hogenkamp of what were until now classified as 'missing' films.) Like the S.F.C. production, and like the commercial newsreels of the day, *Workers' Newsreel No. 1* was made up of a number of stories from different locations—the *Daily Worker* 1934 Gala in Co-op Woods,

Plumstead, the opening of a new L.C.S. store, the Hendon Air Pageant, an anti-war congress in Sheffield and an anti-war demonstration in Hyde Park. These are skilfully selected and intermingled to promote only one theme—that, as is stated in two central titles, 'The Workers Create' and 'Capitalism Destroys'.

In similar vein, *Workers' Newsreel No. 2* contains stories from London, Paris and Wrexham Colliery and closes with a jibe at the *Daily Herald*, which was a recurring feature of these W.F.P.L./Kino films. Jonathan Lewis has already described (SIGHT AND SOUND, Spring 1977) the contents of the main section of this newsreel, on the 9 September Fascist rally in Hyde Park, where the anti-Fascists staged what is captioned in surprisingly modern terms 'A Counter Demo'. The footage on an anti-Fascist Sports Rally in Paris is in poor over-duped condition, but was significantly included to reinforce the message that only an International United Front could defeat Fascism.

In the summer of 1934 W.F.P.L., using

during the previous year it had become increasingly difficult for the League's cameramen to film newsworthy events in their spare time and for the editors to assemble the footage for release while it was still topical. Therefore, at the time when Kino decided to revive its own group, the F.P.L. members concentrated their efforts on building up groups of local enthusiasts who could produce their own films in their own time, of relevance to the labour movement as a whole. The productions which emerged—some seven or eight in all—ranged in style from the professional approach of the Green brothers in their film *Jubilee* (an attack on '25 Years of Progress' which should shame today's aspiring film-makers into doing the same in this Jubilee year) to the cheerful optimism of *Construction*, in which a strike for union recognition quickly brings the management to heel, and the realism of *Revolt of the Fishermen and Strife*, where the fight against wage cuts is bitterly fought and victory leads only to a slight improvement in living standards.

which it had always specialised. The League remained very much a socialist counterpart to the middle-class (non-political?) amateur film-making groups and film societies which were formed in the 30s throughout the country, and survive to this day. The League distributed some films on 9.5 mm—a popular gauge with amateurs—and maintained their grass roots links when other left-wing groups concentrated on international theatres of conflict. Irene Nicholson's call to arms in the January 1936 first and last edition of *The Camera Forward*, a Bulletin of the W.F.P.L., was headed: 'Sub-standard is the only way out. But it must be taken seriously, built up into an organised working form, not left as a hobby. Baby playing in the garden is not the only subject for a cine camera.'

Kino still distributed some F.P.L. films, and in the autumn of 1936 opted for distribution rights in the next major F.P.L. production, *March Against Starvation*, rather than produce a rival film of its own. Typical of many letters in the files is one dated 27 December 1936 which relates to



Unreleased newsreel footage: London, 7 May 1933



'March Against Starvation': march organiser Wal Hamington

the Kino logo, also made *National Hunger March and Bread*, the first a forerunner of the more successful two-reel *March Against Starvation* of 1936 and the second a forerunner of the story documentaries which the F.P.L. made from 1935 onwards in preference to newsreels. The next production, *Workers' Newsreel No. 3* (Kino's title), known as *U.A.B.* by the F.P.L., was a technical and political high-point of the series. It combined detailed footage of the 24 February 1935 demonstration organised by the N.U.W.M. against the proposed cuts in Unemployment Assistance with sophisticated flip-over slogans to produce a stirring account of this protest against poverty, made when the economic tide was supposedly turning and the worst of the depression was over. Copies of *Workers' Newsreel No. 4* have not survived, but references in the F.P.L. documents and the *Daily Worker* suggest that there was some conflict between Kino and the League over its assembly. The League was not allowed a free rein as it had been on the production of *U.A.B.*, and the series ended with this edition in the summer of 1935.

In its report of April 1936, the F.P.L. Newsreel Group bemoaned the fact that

As in the earlier newsreels, the message of each film is 'Unity Wins', but it is brought down to the specific issue of unionisation rather than the general rallying cry of 'Popular Front'. Each film was autonomous and individually financed by loans and grants, and only in the case of *Winter* did the F.P.L. put up all the money. Each film was a collective effort, none more so than *Construction*, made by men on a building site with a bricklayer as producer. Local groups affiliated to the League were encouraged to film any event relevant to the labour movement, if necessary re-creating an incident, and the League would provide any assistance needed in editing or distributing the film. Apart from technical equipment, there is little to differentiate these efforts from what is being done today on a larger scale because of larger investment by community video groups.

By April 1936 the split between Kino and the League was formalised; the reasons seem to have been both practical and ideological. Kino no longer automatically distributed every F.P.L. production. It ran its own production group and brought in news footage from abroad and from such organisations as the Progressive Film Institute, as well as the foreign feature films in

this film: 'It is unfortunately one of the failings of this organisation that their meetings are never conducted in a business-like manner. . . One thing is quite certain. Something will have to be done about the March film. The N.U.W.M. have paid £10 towards the expenses and they are entitled to see something for their money.' The final sentence, 'I am sorry that I am not accessible and have to leave so early,' encapsulates the problems of the League—it was so easy for an observer to pontificate on what should be done, but so difficult for anyone to devote adequate time to a group whose activities included seminars, weekend schools, camera and scriptwriting instruction as well as film-making. Had nothing else survived, *March Against Starvation* would be testimony to the importance of the League and its enduring place in the history of political film-making in this country.

One of many original title cards in the F.P.L. collection lists the principal participants in this film, whose complex shooting schedule is also available for study in the files: 'Helen Biggar (Glasgow School of Art), Michael Burke, S. Feld, F.P.L., H. Kay (Manchester Workers' Film League), H. Ludlow (Independent Films), Rudolph Messel, S.F.C., W. Richardson (Doncaster

Workers' Film Society), Ivan Seruya, Sime Seruya, E. D. Stich, F.P.L.' It is impossible to establish whether this title is missing from the film because it smacked of elitism, because it was mislaid, or because it took too long to read. The film itself is a sophisticated amalgam of techniques used in the 1934 newsreels and *National Hunger March* and in the story documentaries of 1935/36. There are shots of Wal Hannington on the telephone in his office and planning the routes of the marchers, whereas earlier films had referred to him by the cheaper method of shooting stills of pamphlets written by him. There is detailed footage, of delegates leaving towns along the route, with special attention paid to Ellen Wilkinson in Jarrow and to York, 'The Forbidden City'. A contingent from Wales peels potatoes at the roadside and boils them up in a huge cauldron. Only such obvious shots as the rear view of a man and woman in the foreground giving clenched fist salutes to the marchers appear to have been staged. The contrived shot of an abandoned knapsack and tin mug is quite appropriate

footage from *Madrid Today* and scenes of a strike-bound Piccadilly.

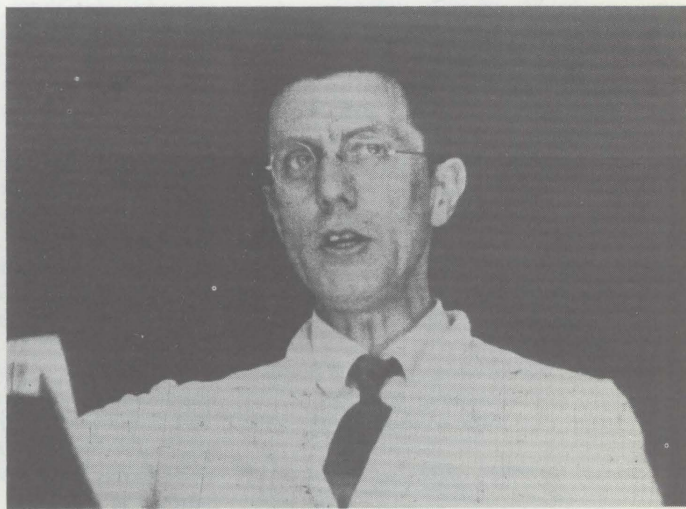
The F.P.L. distribution library was overhauled in 1937 and functioned well in 1937 and 1938. Other films were planned, such as *Spain 1936-1937* (of which fragments of fascinating footage from Republican Barcelona survive) and *Building the People's Front*, but none seems to have come to fruition. The distribution library revenue eased the League's financial burdens, which were exacerbated by unorthodox loans both to and from the League of money and equipment. The hire charges were so minimal that had it not been for the phenomenal growth of Left Book Clubs and the reduction in scope of the League's activities, the League would surely have folded before the outbreak of war in 1939. On 7 June 1937 a conference was held in London 'to discuss the co-ordination of substandard film work for Left propaganda', and an ambitious plan was drawn up for Left Book Club branches to affiliate to the League and start their own Film Groups. Demand for the few foreign films held by

perhaps what today's equivalent of these committed films lacks, although comparisons between then and now are only superficially rewarding. These films, and other documentaries from the 30s, suggest that times have changed beyond recognition. The films present a cavalcade of leading figures in the Popular Front Communist and Labour organisations—Tom Mann, Harry Pollitt, John Gollan, Ted Bramley, James Maxton, Wal Hannington, Peter Kerrigan—and of artists committed to the Left such as the members of Unity Theatre and the poet John Cornford, seen briefly on the steps of a building in Cambridge, who was killed in Spain while fighting with the International Brigade.

Over the decade the League and its films moved away from the politics of class warfare and social revolution towards the gradualist notions of the intellectual socialists who supported the Left Book Club. The growth of F.P.L. local groups ceased when L.B.C. film groups started to affiliate to the League. These groups had little



Undated anti-Fascist parade, from one of many off-cuts in the collection



'Red Right and Bloo': John Lewis

after the banner 'We are One Man Short. Patrick Halpin died on the road October 28th. He gave his life in the fight to end The Means Test and Poverty.'

Cuthbertson's plans for coverage of the May Day rally in 1937 were even more ambitious, although the location was confined to the streets of London. Members of the League were stationed along the route and asked to shoot for two separate films, *May the First 1937*, 'the record of the inspiring spectacle of London's militant workers', and *The Merry Month of May*, 'A Satire and Document in Kodachrome' (the first reported use of colour stock by the League). International affairs were now embraced by the League again. They could hardly have been avoided when the march footage was dominated by ornate floats made by Basque refugees and huge posters of the leaders of Republican Spain and of the Indian independence movement, although Cuthbertson allowed himself the privilege of including film of the Socialist Christian Movement of which he was a leading member. In *The Merry Month of May* (of which only reel one survives), Hugh Cuthbertson takes a sardonic view of the Coronation celebrations, cut in with

the League increased, and suggestions were made to enliven the projection of the silent Castle newsreels (imported from the States and retitled) with provocative commentaries. *Left Film Front No. 1* (the F.P.L. bulletin which replaced *The Camera Forward*) in July 1937 is full of ideas about film and political action, but it does not formulate a Marxist cultural critique of film criticism, as Bert Hogenkamp had hoped it would prior to its rediscovery.

Co-operation between the League and the L.B.C. was advertised in their July 1937 co-production *Red Right and Bloo*, which was selected for exhibition by the Royal Photographic Society. The film again combines actuality (shots of the L.B.C. conference at Digswell Park, with John Lewis, Victor Gollancz and John Strachey in evidence), with a fictionalised account of 'an aristocratic adherent of the "Bloo" Book Club who lands by accident at the Left Book Club, reads red books and learns what is right' (quoted from commentary notes to the film). While displaying a somewhat dated sense of undergraduate humour, the film nevertheless stands up today as an excellent amateur co-operative effort, both entertaining and enlightening.

A desire to entertain as well as to inform is

interest in film-making when they could hire films on topics they wanted to discuss from any of the left-wing non-theatrical distributors. Something of the fervour and confidence typified by the F.P.L.'s remarkably Godardian slogan, 'Cine is the machine-gun of ideological warfare', went out of the League before organisational problems forced its demise in 1939. Hugh Cuthbertson's appeal to members to 'hold aloft the F.P.L. torch' in 1937 prompted a typical reply: 'Why hold it aloft any longer? Don't your arms ache? Anyway have we a torch?'

Such disillusion with the development of left-wing politics was not confined to the affairs of the Film and Photo League. Optimism thrives on clear-cut issues, and the League achieved a remarkable rate of film production in the years 1934 to 1936. Thereafter the increasing conflict and confusion in international affairs clouded the issues, so that former colleagues could no longer agree on the same tactics against acknowledged enemies. The archive of the F.P.L. is valuable in itself, and as a reflection of these developments. Each film provides unwitting insight into the character of the 30s, while ostensibly promoting a single account of an incident or theme of interest to the labour movement. ■

FILM WRITING DEGREE ZERO

'... Perhaps it is time to study discourse not only according to its expressive values, or in its formal transformations, but also according to its modes of existence: the modes of circulation, attribution and appropriation of discourse vary with each culture... the effect on social relationships can be more directly seen, it seems to me, in the interplay of authorship and its modifications than in the themes or concepts contained in the works.'

—Michel Foucault, 'What is an Author?'

It seems likely that *Hollywood Directors 1914-1940* and *Movies and Methods** are the two most interesting anthologies of writing about film recently published in English. Each marks a substantial foray beyond the standard recycling operations of most anthologies, making available a wealth of helpful material that is otherwise hard to come by... An easy enough assessment, on the face of it, yet one that conceals a nagging question: what do we mean by 'interesting' and 'helpful'? In what way can both books be considered deserving of the same ambiguous adjectives? How far do they allow themselves to be considered within the same universe of discourse?

First, a few basic distinctions. All fifty of the selections in Koszarski's collection were written between 1914 and 1939 by 'Hollywood directors'—stretching that term to include such figures as Alice Guy-Blaché, Paul Fejos, Robert Flaherty and Maurice Tourneur. Nearly all the articles originally appeared in mass circulation newspapers, magazines, trade journals or previous collections: *Breaking into the Movies*, *Careers for Women*, *The Ladies' Home Journal*, *The Motion Picture Director*, *The Moving Picture World*, *Photoplay Magazine*, *Popular Mechanics*, *Shadowland*, *Theatre Magazine*, *Travel*, etc.

Thus the form of these pieces is popular journalism, and Koszarski concedes in his introduction that some of them might have

been ghost-written: 'Often the obsessions voiced under these bylines are so characteristic as to label their authors unmistakably. But if at times a "written to order" piece has slipped in, the worst we can say is that it was issued as an authorised statement, and now exists as a puzzle for interested historians.' It is worth adding that Hollywood generally dictates the total view of cinema that the book projects. When, for instance, the editor reflects that 'perhaps only Hitchcock approached the degree of pre-planning practised by Lubitsch,' one is clearly not being encouraged to think of Eisenstein or Ozu. As in Andrew Sarris' *The American Cinema*—which Koszarski occasionally reflects in his discerning thumbnail sketches of Edmund Goulding's visual style and the differences between Sennett and Roach comedies—the cross-references tend to be *sui generis*.

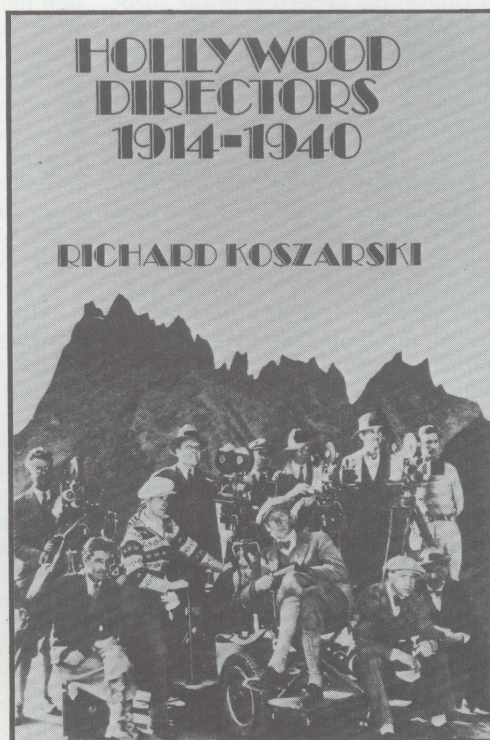
On the other hand, excepting only reviews by Osip Brik and Viktor Shklovsky

from the late 1920s, nothing in *Movies and Methods* was written earlier than 1948, and very few of the fifty-two pieces predate the 60s. And in further contrast, the articles chiefly come from magazines and books devoted to criticism: *Cinéaste*, *Film Comment*, *Film Quarterly*, *The Film Till Now*, *Movie*, *The New York Review of Books*, *Screen*, *SIGHT AND SOUND*, *The Velvet Light Trap*, *Women & Film*, etc. The mode of popular instruction about how to launch and sustain a film career is as conspicuously absent here as the mode of criticism is from the Koszarski collection; concern with film budgets is replaced by concern with intellectual and academic investments, and the issue of authorship is addressed quite differently. As Nichols remarks in his preface to the final section: '... Most of these writers have little or no interest in preserving the Romantic fiction of the solitary and creative genius... This project of "decentering" critical study away from the individual, the author or point of origin, and towards processes and systems which in many ways can be said to "speak the subject" is one shared by structuralism and semiology alike.'

Both books, one could note, explicitly alter the original purpose of their contents. Koszarski's collection is chronologically ordered and put together with a kind of scholarly care which seeks to convert his findings into material that is *historically* useful: an aspiring movie actress today is not likely to read Marshall Nielan's thoughts in 1922 on 'Acting for the Screen: the six great essentials' for concrete advice. Nichols arranges his own selections under three main headings (Contextual Criticism, Formal Criticism, Theory) and various subheadings (Political Criticism, Feminist Criticism, Auteur Criticism, etc.) to illustrate different critical methodologies—contriving, in a more

The
Market
Place
and
the
University

Jonathan
Rosenbaum



MOVIES
AND
METHODS

Edited by
Bill Nichols

indirect fashion, to suggest a history and development of another sort.

Each anthology, then, is presented as a disciplined academic endeavour that seeks to affect existing film discourse, not merely duplicate or pay homage to it. Yet an almost immeasurable gulf seems to stretch between the books and their separate points of focus. They confront us with two different kinds of discourse which one might choose to identify, respectively, with the Marketplace and the University.

'The mass-culture maker . . . is essentially a reflector of myths, and lacks concrete experiences to communicate. To him man is an object seen from the outside . . . To the professional of mass culture, knowledge is the knowledge of what is going on in other people; he trades his own experience for an experience of experience.'
—Harold Rosenberg, 'The Herd of Independent Minds'

Read in bulk, many of the pieces in *Hollywood Directors* tend to slide off the mind. Like much popular journalism, they seem designed to be read in a state of semi-attentiveness, a benign sort of stupor in which nice-sounding platitudes drum on the consciousness with all the dulling comfort of rain on a roof. A halfway house between talking and writing, they often fail to satisfy as either because the tone comes across as artificial and strained. Indeed, much of the material registers as slightly harried, impatient answers to eager, dim-witted questions which are not reproduced, but are easily enough imagined:

Tell me, Mr. Borzage, what are the main qualities you think a director should have? 'A Director should have some of the qualities of a leader, the ability to make decisions that are right most of the time, and the quality which inspires confidence in those about him.' *Mr. Langdon, in your considered opinion, what is it that makes people laugh?* 'The four greatest stimuli to laughter are rigidity, automatism, absent-mindedness and unsociability.' *What is the American film industry doing to fight fascism overseas, Mr. Tuttle?* 'A group of young cartoonists from Hollywood's animated cartoon studios are preparing plans for cartoons to knife the dictators right in their Mickey Mice.' *How do you go about directing a picture?* 'It is no more possible to dogmatise about the methods of work of a film director than it would be to lay down laws about how an author should write his books. In both cases generalisation can go no further than the primary and superficial details of routine.'

The sensible response of George Cukor to this last hypothetical query—which virtually invalidates the thrust of most of these declarations—merely reminds one that most of these articles are necessarily treading water, trying helplessly to come up with certainties in a context where lack of secure authorship often characterises the form and subject alike of their statements. Inevitably, all these efforts inhabit a Marketplace terrain where knowledge, in Harold Rosenberg's words, 'is the knowledge of what is going on in other people', and this knowledge itself continually threatens to

supplant the director's own powers of expression—whether on the screen or on the page; the ostensible subject is movies, but the spectre of money hovers in the background, virtually calling many of the shots. Thus 'knowledge' in this framework often resembles the triumph of the ape cited by Vladimir Nabokov, who 'after months of coaxing by a scientist, produced the first drawing ever charcoaled by an animal: this sketch showed the bars of the poor creature's cage.'

When this knowledge is sufficiently provocative, the results can be entertaining and/or instructive: Maurice Tourneur adroitly running through a catalogue of movie clichés in 1920 and bemoaning his failure to get his films shown when he tried to move beyond them; Keaton explaining in detail why an expensive rubber-fish gag in *The Navigator* failed to draw laughs; William Cameron Menzies recalling how he had to scrap a replica of the Campanile of Toledo for a Mary Pickford vehicle after audiences asked what Madison Square Garden (which copied this campanile) was doing in a Spanish setting; Cecil B. DeMille solemnly noting that in film, unlike theatre, 'I have found that what is called acting will count for nothing beyond fifteen feet.' Perhaps most rewarding is Mack Sennett recounting rules of decorum as dictated by the tastes of his audience circa 1918—a list which conveniently matches some of the insights a 'structuralist' critic might glean from a Sennett comedy fifty years later:

'The copper is fair game for pies, likewise any fat man. Fat faces and pies seem to have a peculiar affinity. On the other hand . . . Shetland ponies and pretty girls are immune. It is an axiom of screen comedy that a Shetland pony must never be put in an undignified position . . . You might as well show Santa Claus being mistreated. The immunity of pretty girls doesn't go quite as far as the immunity of the Shetland pony, however. You can put a pretty girl in a comedy shower bath. You can have her fall into mud puddles. They will laugh at that. But the spectacle of a girl dripping with pie is displeasing.'

All such concrete observations get down to the brass tacks of a commercial director's trade. It is in the more nebulous realm of theory that these spokesmen (or their mouthpieces) tend to lose credibility. And one might even quarrel with the precise accuracy of F. W. Murnau's description of his own work in 1928: 'They say that I have a passion for "camera angles" . . . To me the camera represents the eye of a person, through whose mind one is watching the events on the screen. It must follow characters at times into difficult places, as it crashed through the reeds and pools in *Sunrise* at the heels of the Boy, rushing to keep his tryst with the Woman of the City. It must whirl and peep and move from place to place as swiftly as thought itself, when it is necessary to exaggerate for the audience the idea or emotion that is uppermost in the mind of the character. I think the films of the future will use more and more of these "camera angles", or as I prefer to call them these "dramatic angles". They help to photograph thought.'

As evocation and explanation of what happens in the celebrated journey across the

marshes near the beginning of *Sunrise*, this is certainly up to the standard of what most reviewers were writing about the film at the time; in certain respects, it no doubt tells us more. Yet read today, it borders on the ingenuous. Thought indeed may be the substance that is photographed when the camera noses after George O'Brien and then darts suddenly *past* him, through a dense network of branches, before coming to a halt in front of Margaret Livingston, waiting for him in a clearing under the moon. But it is not clear whether the thought that is uppermost is the character's or Murnau's. Arriving at the clearing well ahead of the hero, and by a somewhat different route, the camera imposes a dreamlike fatality on O'Brien's destination, as if he were being reeled in like a fish—a pawn not only of the City Woman but of the director/spectator/voyeur who first perceives her. And it is the voluptuous *experience* of thought, one might add, that is being filmed, not its implied intellectual or emotional content—a thought that might include the Boy's obsessions in its trajectory, but still moves independently of them.

From the vantage point of the Marketplace, such qualifications might seem like nit-picking. But Murnau's method of description is certainly foreign to the way that a Hitchcock would spell out the specifics of such a sequence today. Does the increased value of exactitude imply that Hitchcock knows more than Murnau did, or only that Hitchcock, unlike Murnau, has an audience that is interested in such fine distinctions?

In Hollywood, 'knowledge of what is going on in other people' usually means a sharp eye for changing fashions, and a further point of interest in this collection is the degree to which other arts are valued in relation to film—an approach that probably would be less fashionable in comparable circles today.* 'Slowly but surely,' writes Rex Ingram or his scribe in 1922, 'the cinema is coming into its own, taking its place, if not beside sculpture and painting as an art, most certainly ahead of the spoken drama.' For Slavko Vorkapich in 1930, 'A perfect motion picture would be comparable to a symphony.' Significantly, Paul Fejos' own reference in 1929 is to fairy-tales, pointing towards the construction of *Lonesome* and his still to be made *Marie, Légende Hongroise*, both of which belie Koszarski's claim that 'Fejos' sense of narrative was weak.' And William DeMille—older brother of Cecil, and director of the neglected *Conrad in Quest of His Youth*—draws persuasively on *Don Quixote* in a side-splitting treatment in 1935 of Mickey Mouse as New Dealer and Popeye as Fascist, with 'good old Pluto fulfilling the duties of Sancho Panza.'

Seen as a scrapbook, *Hollywood Directors* becomes itself a quixotic gesture in its noble efforts to preserve Romantic fragments from a rapidly vanishing past. The disappearance or virtual unavailability of films directed by Maurice Tourneur, William DeMille, Ingram, Fejos, Murnau and countless others makes Koszarski's resurrections of their 'authorised statements' doubly poignant. And these scattered ramblings, however

*It might be said that the social and physical sciences currently play an equivalent role for most directors and critics: Marx, Pavlov and Laing rather than Rembrandt, Brueghel and Doré.

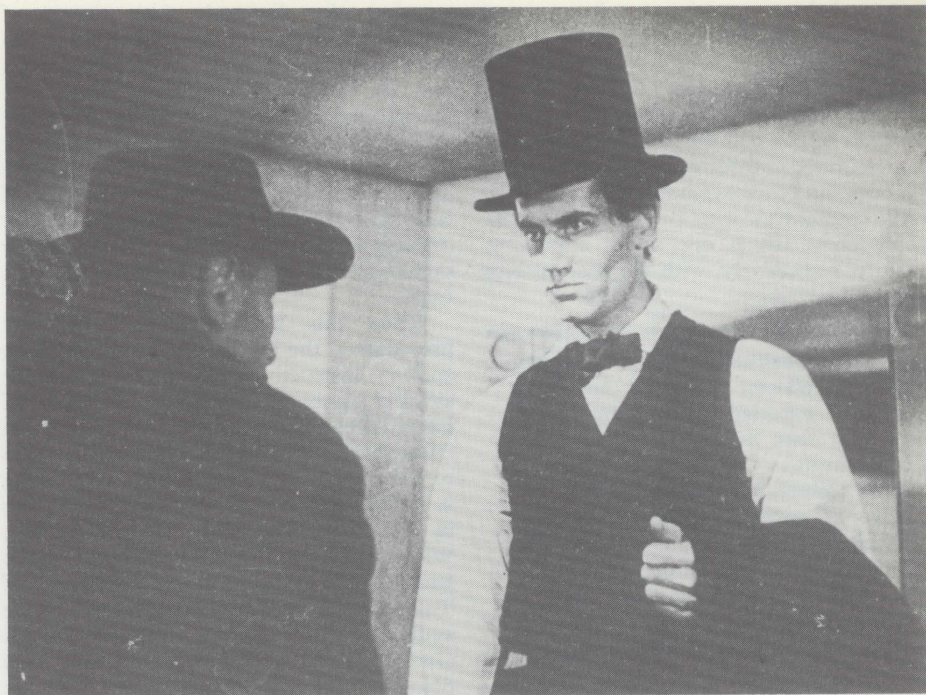
limited in their range of detail and nuance, may ultimately have to serve as substitutes for works that the Marketplace has already absent-mindedly burned, buried, lost or squandered.

'The spreading influence of political and social facts into the literary field of consciousness has produced a new kind of scriptor, halfway between the party member and the writer, deriving from the former an ideal image of committed man, and from the latter the notion that a written work is an act. Thus while the intellectual supersedes the writer, there appears in periodicals and in essays a militant mode of writing entirely freed from stylistic considerations, and which is, so to speak, a professional language signifying "presence".'—Roland Barthes, 'Writing Degree Zero'

Retrieval work of another kind is to be found in *Movies and Methods*, a critical anthology which has the uncommon virtue of concentrating mainly on pieces that haven't inundated other 'textbook' collections.* While an ideal anthology would go further and commission its own translations of important and unavailable texts—and correct those it reprints more carefully, so that Jean-Louis Comolli isn't rechristened Jean-Luc and Straub isn't credited with imaginary titles like *The Diary of Anna Magdalena Bach*—the least that can be said of Bill Nichols' mammoth assemblage is that it spreads its nets far and wide, and the language on display here is accordingly varied.

Polemically speaking, however, the editorial notes and most of the final section on Theory point this anthology in an unmistakable direction—and one that largely coincides with Barthes' description of 'typical' writing in *Esprit* and *Les Temps Modernes* in the early 50s. This is apparent from the first page of the introduction, where the simple use of a feminine pronoun ('methodologies intervene between the writer and her subject') already announces a style ostensibly formed by political and intellectual allegiances, and is no less evident on the last page of text, the conclusion of a Glossary explaining everything from 'Analog/Digital' to 'Textual System(s)'.

This anonymous, collective style resembles that of *Hollywood Directors*, in so far as neither book can be read straight through without some mental calcification setting in; but the implications of authorial absence are quite different. In Koszarski's book, it is characteristically a sign of the director's defeat in letting his or her voice be heard—a problem reflected in many of the same directors' films, and cruelly parodied when their various complaints, hopes and axioms about this difficulty begin to sound more and more like each other's. In *Movies and Methods*, conversely, it becomes a sign of apparent triumph: facelessness here is more



'Young Mr. Lincoln': Henry Fonda. '... Lincoln himself cannot be "had", possessed, known'

prone to be a badge of authenticity, commitment, membership in a burgeoning community of common aspirations.

Within such a framework, language is taken to be a necessary evil more than a methodology of its own, and any notion of performance (as opposed to demonstration), which might include writers as dissimilar as Barthes, Manny Farber and Jonas Mekas, is effectively rendered obsolete. Sontag barely scrapes in, and only after an editorial warning that her 'vantage point is that of the solitary intellectual beholden to nothing so impersonal as a methodology.' Safety in numbers is the evident watchword; and much as an institution like the Academy Awards partially serves to offset the more cut-throat aspects of an industry by promoting an image of social cohesion, the 'community of scholars' is a not entirely false myth which helps to ensure the preservation of a corporate image.

The solitary reader drifts through the thickets of this discourse in something like the way that spectators/tourists get about in Tativille—on a kind of conveyor belt which guarantees distance, carefully chosen sights (and sites) and alternate options of attention. But if one should choose to depart from the planned itinerary and move about at will, one quickly enters a chaotic Babel; and if the tourist/reader occasionally slams into a glass door, the comedy isn't always intentional.

'Lincoln's mediation also forces the film to crack open revealing the ideological function of his role. For example, Lincoln's seemingly benevolent representation of the Law actually originates in a terrible, castrated, castrating operation which produces Law "as a pure prohibition of violence whose result is only a permanent indictment of the castrating effects of its discourse", and which effectively restrains him from a full self-realisation of the qualities he mediates (he is wholly other). Lincoln himself cannot be "had", possessed, known. He frames the context ...'

This is Nichols himself, discussing the justly celebrated *Cahiers du Cinéma* analysis of *Young Mr. Lincoln*. Stumbled into hap-

hazardly, as an isolated patch of prose, it is likely to inflict bruises; approached more circumspectly and contextually, through the filters provided by other discourses, it becomes relatively lucid. For squatters in the Semiology-Structuralism settlement who have already set up shop, it is nothing more than the continuation of a discussion that has been long in progress. If you've stuck around and dutifully made the acquaintance of the *Cahiers* collective—who, in turn, might have helped introduce you to the local barber, Althusser, and funny Doc Lacan who lives across the way—you can listen to Nichols and find that he's just talking horse-sense.

Given the proper orientation, one can also make one's own alignments amongst the warring factions in residence. This lends additional suspense to the confrontations as Rothman has it out with Dayan on 'The System of the Suture', Abramson beats Wollen to the draw while protecting Pasolini's ranch, and Nichols himself—in a showdown finale destined to forge a legend, after nearly a hundred pages of contextual preparation—picks off Wollen, the *Cahiers* gang, Metz and Eco, thereby establishing more space in town so that Bateson and Wilden might stake their own claims.

The metaphor is a deliberately vulgar and excessive one for an activity that might also, with justice, be called collective work. Yet the spirit of competition and potential usurpment is no more absent from much of this prose—particularly the portion coming from American sectors—than from the Western town in *My Darling Clementine*, another privileged site in many of these debates. Even if the status of the individual author ('the Romantic fiction of the solitary and creative genius') is partially undermined by the University discourse, the mood of contest within a forum of ideas remains very much in evidence. And the consequences of this attitude are worth considering.

Part of this is reflected in the treatment of history promulgated by this anthology's categories and selections, which the section on Formal Criticism makes especially evident.

*To cite only half a dozen: Jean-Louis Comolli and Jean Narboni's 'Cinema/Ideology/Criticism'; Raymond Durnat on von Sternberg; *Cahiers du Cinéma*'s 'John Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln*'; Brian Henderson's 'Two Types of Film Theory'; Susan Sontag on Riefenstahl and Richard Thompson on Chuck Jones.

As Nichols admits elsewhere, 'Many of the articles included here employ more than one method, and an element of arbitrariness enters into their classification.' Retrospectively, this can help to account for the fact that 'Political Criticism' and 'Feminist Criticism' occupy separate subdivisions of 'Contextual Criticism', that Russian formalist reviews are used to lead off the Political (and not the Formal) section, and that 'Formal Criticism' is subdivided into 'Auteur Criticism' and 'Mise-en-Scène Criticism' (the latter of which includes a study of the abstract work of Paul Sharits).

But is all this as arbitrary as it might first appear? 'Auteur' and 'mise-en-scène' are both somewhat bastardised terms harking back to a specific historical juncture—the point at which they were culled from the pages of *Cahiers* (and, in the case of the latter, decked out with gratuitous hyphens that were never used in French) and then pressed into different functions, chiefly through the work of Andrew Sarris in the early 1960s. An essential part of this juncture was the privileged status accorded to Hollywood, coupled with an almost systematic avoidance of the formal branches of film-making that lay outside the studio systems.

Coming at a time in Anglo-American criticism when such figures as Fuller, Hawks and Sirk were being denied recognition as artists, these terms (however imprecise) proved effective as polemical calling cards. And, by and large, the major aims of the battle were won—to the extent that when Nichols in his introduction refers to Fuller and Nicholas Ray as 'neglected' directors, one wonders what he could possibly mean by that adjective. But the fact that history is usually written by the victors can make recent events seem disproportionately important, while earlier happenings of arguably greater significance are all but obliterated from memory. It is apparently within these conditions that the seminal sources of formal film study (Munsterberg, Arnheim, the Russian formalists, Eisenstein, Epstein, Balázs, etc.) can be either ignored or displaced—and contemporary inheritors of this tradition, such as Burch and Michelson, essentially bypassed—for a definition of formal criticism that begins with Truffaut and Sarris.

Other short-cuts are visible in the isolation of the *Young Mr. Lincoln* analysis from any account of *Cahiers du Cinéma's* history, and subsequent uses of certain terms in that essay. When 'classic cinema' was provisionally defined there, the authors sensibly noted that 'obviously in the course of these studies we will have to examine, and perhaps even challenge it, in order finally to construct its theory.' Now that the term has become a standard fixture in University prose, the necessity for such an interrogation has seemingly vanished, leaving the term free to reap ideological havoc as it continues to validate an object that has not yet even achieved theoretical status. This leads to such thrilling non-statements as Daniel Dayan's rallying cry—'The system of the suture is to classical cinema what verbal language is to literature'—and implies elsewhere an unspoken collective agreement which, like the hyphenated *mise-en-scène*, has grown overnight from a momentary expedient to an ill-defined dwelling-unit where

scores of professors can promptly take out leases.

The academic debates made possible by this kind of fungus growth, ranging from the purposeful to the pedestrian, are of course a very recent development; and, ironically, it is the strenuous desire to remain *au courant* that dates these texts most decisively. Many of Nichols' most recent selections are already a mite rickety because of the contextual chains of reference anchoring them in particular stages of various debates. This is anticipated in a note explaining that most selections were made in 1972–73, and a remark elsewhere that 'this anthology is concerned with a process, a struggle for knowledge, not the enshrinement of certain approaches as timeless truth'—a form of openness which is clearly one of the book's strong points.

This means, however, that the conscientious student who buckles down to 'master' a 1971 lecture by Christian Metz in hopes of keeping abreast of the latest semiological developments, is bound to be in for some galling frustration when she discovers that Metz' positions have since undergone substantial revision, making the focus of her mastery hopelessly *dépassé*. A useful clarification of this sort of problem comes in David Bordwell's 1975 auto-critique of a 1971 study of *Citizen Kane*, testifying to the methodological advances that criticism has made over a very short period.

In the course of this development, the calculated efforts of the University to shun the tactics and consequences of Marketplace criticism have been both a boon and a deception—welcome in the stance of scholarly disinterest and theoretical rigour, myopic in the apparent belief that such a pure division is possible. Who's to say, after all, that *Movies and Methods* won't affect the classroom rentals of *Young Mr. Lincoln*? And in many selections devoted to other topics—the populist films of Capra, Borzage's *Disputed Passage*, *Cries and Whispers*, *Godfather II*—one can feel the tension of University methods vying with Marketplace superlatives, language which oscillates uneasily between the rigours of academic demonstration and the looseness of informal speech.

Stepping back from the spectre of Marketplace and University prose, one begins to wonder whether other options are open to film writing. If, according to Pasolini, there is something called a cinema of poetry, can't one also conceive of a poetics of criticism? The oblique critical content of *Hollywood Directors* often suggests that film aesthetics resemble mail-order recipes; the incomparably greater precision of most pieces in *Movies and Methods* seldom indicates that criticism can or should be anything but a sluggish, plodding process tracing methodical steps up theoretical ladders. Yet Eisenstein, Epstein, Barthes and others offer substantial proof that critical writing need not be crippled by subservience to either faction. Most Russian formalist criticism remains to be translated, but a few of the tantalising samples that have already appeared suggest that literature and criticism, art and science, lyricism and precision, rigour and imagination don't have to be nearly as incompatible as these two categories imply. ■

TV and Film Production

from page 207

between them. He pointed out that although the networks are SFP's main clients, providing 94 per cent of its revenue, SFP makes heavy losses while the networks are making large profits.

The Service Strategy

Many television organisations are not only producers and transmitters of programmes, but have built up a substantial reservoir of facilities, production personnel and expertise. The service strategy seeks to use these to attract capital for film/TV co-productions. While no public broadcasting service is actively employing this strategy in Europe, it is being pursued by the Australian Broadcasting Commission. ABC has recently made arrangements with the West German tax shelter company Gesellschaft für Geschäftsführung und Beteiligung (GGB) of Munich. ABC is investing some \$1m (£590,000) in a series of films budgeted at between \$1.75m and \$2.0m. The investment is in terms of a service contract, whereby ABC will provide services in kind, either from its own resources or by buying them in from the Australian freelance market. It will also, of course, participate in the profits of the films—which are to include *Hunted*, *Barrier Reef* and *Fuzz*. For GGB, the advantages are Australian locations and scenery, plus co-ordinated provision of services and labour. For ABC, potential profits and the use of its production facilities and personnel. The strategy does not necessarily have any long term relation to building up an Australian cinema, but it is an effective short term measure.

The Future

Any future strategy for relating broadcasting policy to film production will need to consider the commercial opportunities, the cultural implications and the stability of the labour market. This means looking not only at the structures and the accountability procedures of the broadcasting organisations but also at the structure of the film industry. If film/television co-production is not to render all public service broadcasting organisations subject to the international market pressures of the film business, then either the broadcasters' involvement in film making must be very closely monitored (and, if necessary, changed) or the Governments of the member states of the European Community must restructure their film industries and render them, in as far as EEC policies permit, more publicly accountable than they are today. It is to be hoped that Sir Harold Wilson's Interim Action Committee have the imagination, the foresight and the courage not only to recognise this, but also to advance proposals which can help to achieve a healthy future not only for Britain's commercial interests, but also for its public service broadcasters and its labour force. ■

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Film Reviews



'New York, New York': Liza Minnelli

New York, New York

If there is one central paradox to Martin Scorsese's movies, it must be their knack for harnessing a single-minded intensity of purpose to an instinct for charging off in a variety of directions. Such contradictory energy is also what makes his protagonists run; and on his home ground, in a Little Italy suffused with the pain of ruling passions running up blind alleys in *Mean Streets*, Scorsese is the peerless spokesman for a world where hell-raising is the only escape from some hell-bent obsession of temperament or ambition.

But, as indicated by the hesitant sketch of *Who's That Knocking at My Door* and the sterile steel trap of *Taxi Driver*—the before and after of *Mean Streets*—Scorsese may be a director with only one 'personal' movie to make and, on the other hand, too much talent and too little control to play the Hollywood genre game (an activity demanded of even the 'new' American directors). *Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore* left the question intriguingly in abeyance. A nicely calculated collision between Scorsese operatics, 50s Doris Day and a whole history of Hollywood romanticism, it moved fast enough to shake its heels at a number of stereotypes, from women's pictures to Women's Lib, but not quite swiftly enough for the New York ghetto irony completely to overcome this mid-West weepie. In other words, the light romantic genre was taken for an invigorating but inconclusive ride.

With *New York, New York* (United Artists) Scorsese has, if anything, taken on a slice of Hollywood—the showbiz musical—even more insulated by tradition and upholstery, and has turned out a craftier pastiche and something quite brilliant in the way of recreation. In an era of dutiful *homages*, nostalgic visitations and only slightly less fruitful send-ups, Scorsese has made over a Hollywood staple in a wholly ori-

ginal way, not so much adapting the musical as invading it like some long-abandoned relic, turning many of its salient features inside out and generally confounding audience expectations with every second scene.

In story and character, *New York, New York* is an efficient blend of old-style Hollywood and street-smart Scorsese. Jimmy Doyle (Robert DeNiro) is a saxophonist who finds himself in New York around the delirious time of V-J Day, hopping insolently but inventively from hotel to hotel, going into a magnificent imitation of a shell-shocked veteran whenever another embarrassed manager threatens his eviction. He is trying, meanwhile, to scrape an audition and, even more urgently, as he joins in the frenzied celebrations for the end of the war, to conclude this historic occasion with someone in bed. He meets but fails to make USO singer Francine Evans (Liza Minnelli), though they subsequently come to share an audition, some romantic and professional vicissitudes, a marriage and, when family responsibilities combine with the strains of opposing careers, eventual estrangement and separation. Success finally smiles on them both when Francine becomes a star of Hollywood musicals and cabaret (in a style that fairly interlocks with present-day Minnelli), while Jimmy returns to his musical roots in a Harlem jazz club before himself making a go of a similar night spot. The final shot emphasises that his feet are planted once more on the mean streets (now become some nocturnal, studio-made wonderland).

Situated in fantasy, Jimmy Doyle thus becomes uniquely blessed among Scorsese heroes—he is allowed to achieve his ambition, the fulfilment of what he calls the 'major chord', when you have everything in life that you want. But Scorsese plays the figure not as fantasy but as a character streaked by the same self-destructive

fanaticism, unwavering drive and crippling ambivalence as any of his street punks on the make—and compresses the psychology of the character not into the predictable narrative of breakdown and break-up, but most tightly into the scenes where one most expects relaxation, i.e. the musical numbers. There is, for the first two-thirds of the film, very little sense of 'performance' about these numbers and considerable emphasis on the emotional tensions they submerge, diffuse or expose. In the first audition sequence, as Jimmy stridently refuses to 'sweeten' his style of playing for a club owner, Francine, who has just come along for the ride, suddenly breaks into a song that is exactly what the man wants, and Jimmy unhesitatingly plays her accompaniment—an impromptu duo that results in their being hired as an act.

The intimation of nervous insecurity running just below Jimmy's uninhibited go-getting, and of a complicated pattern of dominance/subservience that will develop through his pursuit of Francine, and the accommodation of his talent to hers, is artfully expanded in a subsequent scene, once Jimmy has taken over the Frankie Harte band and is strenuously working out a routine with Francine and various recalcitrant band members. In agitatedly comic fashion, Jimmy tries to release the tensions by hurling a couple of the club tables about, then reprimands Francine for usurping his role in giving the band the beat to start, before she tips the mike over in front of him at the song's end and stalks off. Thus, the decisive and most bitter moment in this clash of temperament is probably not the scene in the hospital, where Jimmy comes to see his new-born son and ends by taking final leave of Francine, but a preceding episode in the Harlem night club where Francine, having just signed another contract for the sort of promotional work Jimmy despises, tries to join her husband on stage, only to be driven back by a blast of the kind of music he has now put before his marriage.

It is the narrative sections between these numbers, handled somewhat elliptically and often as simple montage, that now have the quality of interludes, of 'shticks' for playing out variations on themes established elsewhere. There is, for example, the delightful wedding by Justice of the Peace in which Francine, having been ordered to dress in the middle of the night and dragged to a snowbound motel, baulks at the last moment, protesting that although this is indeed different as weddings go, 'It's not the different I had in mind,' while Jimmy threatens suicide by lying down behind their cab. Or there is the scene, filmed in one long-shot take, where Jimmy, having tracked Francine from New York to Georgia, dashes from a phone booth to catch a train and is dragged along as he quixotically tries to hold up its departure.

In similar spirit, the pastiches of other musicals never acquire their expected weight, but serve simply to indicate where Scorsese has situated his film in relation to the musical tradition. If the overall theme has to do with the disappearance of the Big Band sound of the 40s and the emergence of 50s 'bebop', then Scorsese seems to be indicating that even more, for the 70s, the musicals of the 40s and 50s are gone beyond recall. The film's final shot is a pan down to Jimmy's patent leather shoes waiting on the rain-spattered sidewalk—suggesting but not quite delivering the reference to *Singin' in the Rain*. There is a brief hint of Vincente Minnelli décor in the clubroom where Jimmy is reunited with Francine and, most plangently, a momentary idyll earlier on when Jimmy pauses to watch a sailor and his girl (from *On the Town*?) dancing beneath the El tracks, all conjuring the kind of movie it is no longer possible to make.

With its finale, *New York, New York* comes slam up to date, in spirit at least, when the quality of performance comes flooding back in Francine's rendition of the title number, and the film gives birth, as it were, to the style of grand-standing, biographical, star-is-made musical, as



'New York, New York': Robert DeNiro

recently incarnated by Minnelli (and Barbra Streisand). The passing of the old-fashioned, communal, let's-put-on-a-show type of musical (*Band Wagon*) in favour of such individualistic celebrations is most cynically indicated, perhaps, in a remark by Jimmy, when he returns to playing in Harlem jazz clubs and is asked why he had slipped from sight for so long, and he replies that he had just been playing with bad musicians.

Scorsese delivers all this, both celebration and critique, in fine, airy style—his camera frequently serving the function of the bouncing ball that used to appear with on-screen song lyrics, indicating exactly where the emphasis should go. Crane shots float breezily above the big bands performing at the opening victory ball, while the scattered, broken scenes of Jimmy and Francine in rehearsal and on stage are filmed with a close-up intensity. Most rewardingly, the film seems to have effected a kind of opening-out—allowing Scorsese to tackle 'given' material more experimentally than in *Alice*, and to pursue characteristic extremes of emotion without the over determined mechanisms of *Taxi Driver*.

RICHARD COMBS

3 Women

Robert Altman's new film belongs to that rare category of imaginative works which defy analysis. Whatever the 'ideas' in it, they seem, both during its two hours running time and on later reflection, to be irrelevant. *3 Women* (Fox) is a vision. It happens to use an enormous number of complex and sometimes wayward cinematic and narrative devices, and I can understand how alert and sensitive cinemagoers may be affronted by what they take to be perverse, obscurantist or downright pretentious. It is so rich and mysterious in its imagery that it is bound to set off radically personal reactions. There will be those who reasonably ask what it is 'about': Feminism? The nature of identity? The heartlessness of the consumer society? I can only report that I was absorbed throughout and that pondering later I cannot find any of these questions important.

Standing before Bosch's painting 'The Garden of Earthly Delights' in the Prado we do not ask about meaning; later, reading that much of the imagery comes from the beliefs and habits of obscure religious and social sects acting on a profoundly paranoid imagination does little to help one's appreciation. One has been affected by a mystical apprehension of fear and beauty. To pursue this image in the same museum: confronting Velasquez' 'Las Meninas', an equally

great work, there is nothing one does not want to know about the artist's use of space and paint; one wants to learn exactly what his political, emotional and artistic intentions were. There is an intellectual ferocity about the painting which invites critical scrutiny. So in Altman's *Nashville* there is a tumultuous social and political subtext which breaks through the imaginative substance of the film. *3 Women* is certainly not a parable, and I don't think it is even an allegory, let alone a 'statement'. It is a vision of love.

Behind the titles a dark, softened, diagonal shifts over mosaic-like murals of clawed, large-genital monsters and then into a swimming-pool where geriatrics are being patiently walked like quiet animals, thigh-deep through curative waters, by beautiful young girls. There is a peculiar slow busyness about this place—the girls are neither nurses nor models, the patients do not seem exactly ill, just old. Voices and splashes are muted; the focus changes often; for example from a meandering crone to two identical wicked-angel twins. Perhaps nothing is happening here. An invented world.

Soon we are caught up in a 'real' story. We are introduced to two of the three women who make up the title. Pinky (Sissy Spacek) is taught the job of perambulating the wrinklies by Millie (Shelley Duvall). The naturalism of these early scenes has the comic power and tenderness of a short story by, say, Dan Jacobson. Pinky idolises Millie, becomes her flat mate and visits 'Dodge City', a desert bar where the boys in the back lot are shooting and dirt track riding. We become absorbed in Pinky's obsession with the daffodil or primrose clad Millie (even her car is mustard coloured and her flat is like the risen sun). At 'Dodge City' lives the third silent woman, Willie (Janice Rule looking a bit like Magnani), whom we discover is the perpetrator of the murals; she's sullenly at work on some new ones. She serves a beer with minimal grace and has the self-absorbed look which says 'I'm an artist: keep out'—a warning which, in life, one would unhesitatingly heed. She's married to a drunken, ageing dude who's given to practical jokes and fornication.

Back at the apartment, which looks out on a communal swimming-pool, Pinky and Millie are trying to get it together. The central motif of these scenes is the wonderful surratturating monologue which issues from Millie. She talks of her prowess as a cook, of her boy friends, of the nights when Pinky will have to sleep on the truckle bed in the other room, of her glamorous

ex-flat mate. The indications that most of what she says is 'yellow-talk'—that it's the desperate chintzy cheerfulness which betokens fantasy—are given to us both delicately and brutally. Each time she is rebuffed by one of the party round the pool, Pinky is more completely under her spell. Millie is a beautiful young Californian version of Barry Humphries' Edna Everage: monstrously self-deluded but with a built-in survival kit. Her knowledge of cookery is revealed to go little further than advice on how to tube an orange paste on to a cocktail biscuit to which she gives the exactly Everage title of 'a sociable'.

There's a problem here. Shelley Duvall is so attractive it is hard to believe that for all that chrome and gamboge jabber she wouldn't be loved—let alone tolerated—by anyone but Pinky. Her isolation is unconvincing, ensconced as it is by such overwhelming physical and, indeed, spiritual charm. It is reported that Miss Duvall wrote '80 per cent of her dialogue', which proves that she is not only a terrific actress but a very good writer. Part of the marvel of her performance is its spontaneity. The way she says 'Thanks' to Pinky's many compliments tells us in the subtlest way that she has got what she's after: respect. She can't add anything faced with the bright fact of recognition, though she's detached to the point of severity in her journal about Pinky's imperfections as a companion. Life—the geriatric pool, the bar, the apartment—is one thing. The journal is truth.

There is another problem in these early scenes. In my opinion Sissy Spacek does not have the charm or the conviction to convey the rapturous engrossment, the predatory innocence which should prepare us for the changes which are to follow. She's a neat actress—good at timing asides. She blows bubbles in her coke with comic authority, she can drop a brick as if it were a feather. There's exactly the wrong sort of calculation about her acting, which makes Shelley Duvall shine all the brighter.

The film shifts, like that wobbling horizontal line which we see again and realise is the high-water mark of a miniature aquarium in Millie's flat—the film changes pace and form almost halfway through. Millie brings back Willie's drunken husband, Edgar, to make love. Pinky is horrified: 'But his wife is pregnant,' she protests. Millie is understandably irritated to be given a cautionary put down by her adoring lodger and is sharp to her. Pinky rushes out and flings herself from a balcony into the pool—also decorated with those nasty monsters painted by Willie.

'Three Women': Janice Rule, Shelley Duvall and Sissy Spacek





'Fellini's Casanova': Madame d'Urfé (Cecily Brown), Casanova (Donald Sutherland)

Pinky is taken to a hospital where for weeks she hovers between life and death.

First through guilt, and gradually through affection, Millie is transformed. She finds Pinky's parents—a humble elderly couple from Texas—who come by bus to California. Pinky rejects them totally, denying that they are her parents at all. Millie takes them and in a heart-seizing shot opens the door to see if they are safe, to find them rocking each other in a tight embrace. It is a memorable image of love, an image both bold and unexpected that the central business of life is attention, tenderness, desire and respect for others. And so it affects Millie. She realises that the owners of the spa are no more than heartless time-servers; they care nothing for Pinky in her illness. Millie resigns, and takes up the full-time job of nursing Pinky back to health.

Pinky's convalescence is no fun. She becomes a sort of successful parody of Millie. Dressed in colours to suit her name, she lounges petulantly, making the boys by the pool, insulting Millie, sleeping with Edgar, shooting with the boys at the back of 'Dodge City'. Her hair is seductively curled; she exudes a depraved and aggressive confidence. Bewildered but stalwart Millie copes as best she can, until news reaches them that Willie, the muralist, is giving birth alone. They hurry out to her lonely accouchement where Millie does her poor best to help the delivery while Pinky reverts to a primal terror of inaction: she cannot get into the car and drive for medical help. The baby is born dead. Millie approaches her, her hands stained with blood. She cannot understand how Pinky cannot love.

There is a final metamorphosis. Edgar has been murdered (whether by Millie alone or the combined efforts of the three women is not made clear). They live now, Millie the mother, Pinky and Willie her charges, in 'Dodge City', a unit; a family. An invented love.

JULIAN JEBB

Fellini's Casanova

Fellini's Casanova (Fox) is a far from perfect work that no critic's cant will ever quite recuperate, up to and including the cavalier Panglossism with which the French school in particular is infected, where all is for the best in this best of all possible films and patches that might strike one as boring or stupid are, one is

testily corrected, *supposed* to be boring or stupid. Nor can there be valid excuse in the fact that Casanova was somewhat of a blind date for Fellini, his having signed a contract with the producer Grimaldi without first reading its small print—in this case, the *Mémoires* themselves, for which, as for the man who wrote them, he subsequently conceived utter loathing.

To start with, the film's structure is loose to a degree that is astonishing even for a director whose forte has never been plotting. Idly, and with an almost provocative lack of discrimination, Fellini leafs through the libertine's life, from the early triumphs which earned him his notoriety to his incarceration for heresy, and from the restless exile that bore him to all the courts of Europe to his humiliating decline as a librarian in Dux where, unable to return to his beloved Venice, he would commence the eight volumes of the work on which this film is 'based'.

But one's understanding of the eponymous hero, whose features, as inevitable as if they were stamped on a coin, age only in the final scene, is rarely advanced by the choice of episodes. Insufficiently diverting in themselves, neither do they relate organically to each other, seeming little more than *morceaux de bravoure*, sometimes brilliant, as at the court of Würtemberg with the Prince's musicians scaling a wall-length organ (whose likeness to something else nagged at me until I remembered Dr. Terwilliker's piano in *The 5,000 Fingers of Dr. T.*), sometimes interchangeable even as to decor and costumes with sequences of the *Satyricon*. As for the more intimate episodes, why are they all so inconclusive? What is so mysterious about 'the mysterious Henriette'? In what way is Dr. Moebius' daughter Isabella to be distinguished from Giacomo's other, dispensable conquests? From the two prostitutes in London he has contracted some sort of venereal disease, but is there the hint of a deeper involvement which would more plausibly motivate his attempted suicide?

If such gaps can probably be put down to editing—a full twenty minutes, it seems, having disappeared between completion and exhibition—there is the related charge that only by exploiting a tired mythology of carnivals and cardinals, by Fellinising poor Casanova as he did Petronius and as he might yet any other defenceless classic (*Fellini-Middlemarch*?), could the maestro accommodate his distaste for

his material. With the kind of strong visual identity his films possess (which is not to deny the contributions of a veritable court of collaborators), the danger of self-parody is evident.

Of the later efforts, which we can date with numerical niceness from 8½, the interest of *Amarcord*, for all its boulevardier sentimentality, is that the Fellinian spectacle is never gratuitous, its circus metaphor kept well in check by a relatively naturalistic, sawdust-without-tinsel framework of provincial life. Here are no clowns, but some outstandingly grotesque Fascists; no freaks, but the lady tobacconist in whose gargantuan breasts the young hero sinks his head; no parade, but the excursion out to the liner Rex, the townsfolk trotting along the boardwalk with the comic and near-choreographic regularity of brightly coloured mobiles. *Casanova*, however, is at only one remove from a circus proper, with seven-foot Sandy Allen (employed with, for Fellini, unexpected discretion) and dwarf attendants, the orgasm race, as in some sideshow booth, between Giacomo and a coachman, and the opening carnival, whose masked revellers loom out of the darkness and confusion as if, like tourists, aware of the camera. And in certain sequences it is difficult to shake off the impression of Fellini gilding a void, as it were, garlanding the zero (for him) of his protagonist with the balloons and streamers of what has become an all-purpose imagination.

Yet it is precisely to this void, this lack of feeling and character, that the film owes its peculiar force. As the director himself admits, he has made an epic of alienation, of disgust, a vast mural on which there is portrayed neither Venice nor Casanova nor women, a very costly movie finally about nothing at all. There is, of course, a sentimentality of disgust (*Taxi Driver*, Schlesinger) no less maudlin than the conventional variety, but Fellini's misanthropy, his depiction of a gross, almost medieval 18th century, carry more weight, are more completely realised, than anything in the 'life-giving' *Amarcord*.

For instance, *Casanova le littérateur* pays scant attention to the various Northern countries through which he travelled, and his single-mindedness becomes one of the formal components of the film. All we see of London is a few square feet of waste land and a bridge swathed in studio fog; Paris, the salon of the Marquise d'Urfé; Dresden, the opera house where, as the giant candelabra are snuffed out, Giacomo bears his wizened old mother into a ghostly coach; and of the Serenissima itself, in Fellini's most splendid single invention, a lagoon of plastic that might have been painted by Tintoretto. The women, too, that Casanova so complacently describes as being all alike in having ruby lips, teeth like pearls and so on, are scarcely more individual on screen, and it is only when they are masked, deformed or in drag that the great lover seems able to overcome his fear of female sexuality. Apart from Topor's sinister etchings (and the whale that houses them!) the only naked genitalia we get to see are those of Rosalba, the woman who haunts his old man's dreams, an automaton. Here the misogyny which has marred even the best of Fellini's work is absolutely integral to his overall conception.

It is certain that for some spectators the film's power will be considerably undercut by a yawning sense of *déjà vu*, a sense that, however sumptuous and for once justified even in its excesses by the blackness of Fellini's vision, we have taken one ride too many on his merry-go-round. But it is no mean achievement, especially in the prudently mediocre cinema of the 70s, to give such flesh to one's fantasies (if fantasies they are), and for that plastic lagoon much may be forgiven him.

At the centre of this dusty caepharum is Giacomo himself, *Fellini's Casanova*, a vain but not unintelligent man suffocating beneath the multiple masks of an ideology of which he is more the valet than the master, and to the

end convinced that it is for his literary and philosophical works that he will be remembered. Whether posturing to Nino Rota's suitably tinny score or copulating with all the feigned energy of a movie jockey on a mechanical horse, Donald Sutherland commands a stunning array of gestures both precise and revealing. He manages to lend tension to a vacuum, and the final, magnificent close-up of his rheumy old eyes, alive nevertheless with a first faint glimmer of self-realisation, is in the context unbearably moving. It is an extraordinarily physical performance and the gem of this flawed masterpiece.

GILBERT ADAIR

The Best Way to Walk

Although set in a 'colonie de vacances' for rather small schoolboys, Claude Miller's confident and—in the best sense—modest first feature film *The Best Way to Walk* (Oppidan) is less concerned with childhood as such than with those childhood scars that smart well past adolescence. Its two contrasting central characters, both working for the summer of 1960 as monitors at the camp, have reached that transitional stage (which can occasionally last a lifetime) where the body has matured but its owner, his mind already on the track he will pursue beyond middle age, has not quite learned what to do with it. Conflicting childhood legacies make the first experiencing of strong and often diffused sexual desires a particularly vivid nightmare: on the one hand, an inculcated furtiveness and shame; on the other, the no less inculcated sense of sex as one more team game, in which the prizes for best performance inevitably entail considerable public muscle-flexing. If insecurity is the common denominator, conformity is the pressure which the blustering bring to bear on the more overtly frightened. The notion that there is a 'best way to walk' (echoed in a scene where the monitor, Marc, tells his charges that there's a correct side for sleeping on), is part of the extrovert's terror of being found deviant. Whereas Miller's 'message', never formally articulated but most clearly evident in the person of the sensitive introvert, Philippe, would appear to be that there really is no 'best way' and no such thing as non-deviant behaviour.

The adult dramas begin when Marc (Patrick Dewaere) blunders into Philippe's room to borrow some candles during one of the rainy summer's frequent power cuts, and catches him (furtive and ashamed) in the full scarlet-frocked drag of a flamenco dancer. The moment of mutual embarrassment is also a moment of mutual recognition, which Philippe wants to acknowledge and Marc wants only to repress. Thereafter, Philippe (Patrick Boucitéy) seeks Marc out as his friend; and Marc gruffly goes along with a friendship whose sexual nature he refuses to acknowledge but which, given the pair's irreconcilable interests, can have no other than a sexual basis.

There is a brief 'honeymoon period' in which the two monitors endeavour to get their groups of boys to play together (a doomed attempt at producing the Renaissance man). But increasingly wild horseplay becomes Marc's method for dealing with inadmissible emotions. He is further confused when Philippe's girl friend Chantal (Christine Pascal) starts paying regular Sunday visits. Unaware of Philippe's mounting despair at his impotence with the lady, Marc competes for her attentions by show-off physical stunts designed to humiliate Philippe, and the rage which drives him on reaches its apogee in an extraordinary sequence at the swimming baths. The occasion, stage-managed by the camp director as one more chance to indulge his weakness for de Gaulle-like oratory, is a formal farewell to a disgraced monitor, Deloux, who has been caught in

possession of pornographic photos. Trying to make a moral lesson of him in language suitable for nine-year-olds, the director loses his linguistic poise when Deloux proceeds to follow a foul-mouthed temper tantrum with a violent epileptic fit. Marc, ostensibly to create a diversion, throws the already feverish Philippe fully dressed into the pool. When Philippe nearly drowns and Chantal fails to find him ridiculous or the situation funny, Marc follows Philippe into the lavatories and thrusts his face into his own vomit.

Philippe's revenge comes at the closing costume ball, to which Marc has come in the hyper-macho guise of a toreador. Dressed once again in the scarlet frills of the brilliant La Huppa, and watched this time by a moustachioed Chantal, Philippe flings his androgynous self at Marc, who is uncertain whether to treat this as part of the fancy-dress fun or as a public threat to his vaunted virility. When Marc finally rebuffs the predatory La Huppa, Philippe knifes him in the thigh. A somewhat unnecessary coda to the film shows Philippe and Chantal, now living together, being shown round an expensive flat by a henpecked estate agent, Marc.

Miller has explained that his film was inspired by a passage in *Bergman on Bergman* about humiliation in childhood. Yet unlike Bergman, and in keeping with someone who views deviation as the norm, Miller surrounds his dramatic scenes of pride and prejudice with a rich humour that balances affection and misanthropy. His characters are faintly ridiculous long before they are humbled, and their absurdity stems in large measure from their attempts to conceal an average dose of inconsistency beneath a monolithic rhetoric. Miller himself formerly worked as an assistant to most of the leading lights of the French New Wave, and his credits range from assistant director on Godard's *Weekend* to production manager on all Truffaut's films between 1969 and 1974 (including *L'Enfant Sauvage*, to whose Auvergne locations he returned for this film). Somewhat miraculously, Miller manages to combine Godard's misanthropy with Truffaut's manifest affection for his characters. The adults are generally rather awful, but it is their ill-concealed vulnerability, and their inability to express their own more positive emotions or to inspire other people's, that makes them really rather lovable.

'Heart of Glass'



One major factor in Miller's disconcerting black humour is the gap which he consistently perceives between adults' view of childhood and children's own experience of it. Though most of the fun and games at the 'colo' are designed to give the children a memorably good time, whenever any child is shown in isolation from the herd (which, shepherded by Marc, seems to spend most of its time trudging through the rain singing the 'title song': 'The best way of walking/Is OUR way of walking . . .'), he is shown as a prey both to misery and to guilt at feeling miserable. One of the more poignant moments shows the director's young son, Nathan Miller, sitting up in bed in an empty dormitory, relishing a large sweet and shedding silent tears as he chews it. His inexpressible desires and dissatisfactions prelude those which, if the film's adult characters are anything to go by, will accompany his passage to maturity.

JAN DAWSON

Heart of Glass

In Werner Herzog the conquistadorial spirit lives again. He sets out to discover new worlds in the manner of a Renaissance explorer navigating by the stars and waging titanic and by now legendary battles with the elements. *Aguirre* is the classic example of film-making's new willingness to get its hands dirty, but the subject was such a tailor-made vehicle for Herzog's trail-blazing approach that it achieved an intensity which was the measure of his quest. But even when they are not epic tales, all Herzog's major films to date have been intellectual adventures (though he would undoubtedly challenge the adjective). And in *Heart of Glass* (Contemporary) this restless need to experiment which often pushes Herzog to eccentricity led him to place the cast under hypnosis. The procedure has already made the film somewhat notorious, but it is justified in the event by lending a superbly somnambulist quality to the acting out of visions which have more in common with Romantic idealism than modern forms of artistic commitment.

Heart of Glass returns to the period and setting of *Kaspar Hauser*. It is not a conventional narrative sequel, except to the extent that a tale from the age of revolutions is the logical follow-up to one from the age of rationalism. But the historical perspective is important in providing

a moment when the beginnings of capitalism and millenarian visions combine naturally. In saying that the film was 'about the end of factories, like the world has seen the end of castles' Herzog seems to have suggested that the world would be turned upside down. Yet *Heart of Glass* could not less resemble the ecological tract he would appear to have had in mind originally; its political meaning is a faint rumble in the distance, and it is held together by the power of its visions.

The story concerns, essentially, a community in Bavaria at about the turn of the 19th century which lives by the manufacture of an extremely precious ruby glass. The factory foreman dies and with him the secret of making the glass, and the factory owner is forced to search desperately—and unsuccessfully—for the formula without which he and the community cannot live. Hias, a cowherd who spends much time in deep meditation in the surrounding mountains, has a power of vision which is so extraordinary that he has become something of a sage among the locals. He can predict who will cross a mountain bridge and which of the evening drinkers in the inn will be dead on the following morning. But his strongest visions are apocalyptic: he sees fire and destruction, he sees the earth's crust crumbling, plague, famine, the fall of the Church in Italy, the last man running in agony through the deserted village after the holocaust. He is unable and probably unwilling to help the factory owner discover the secret of the glass, in the same way that the owner cannot be deflected from his search to organise the bear-hunting party Hias asks for. Ultimately, both Hias and the owner land in prison, where their affinity is revealed: Hias has foretold the factory's destruction by fire while the owner has actually set it alight in the moment of exaltation which follows the murder of his servant girl Ludmilla.

But *Heart of Glass* is not really a narrative film. The tale of the factory is simply a narrative counterpoint, though it is realised in splendid detail. Herzog takes time off for a number of low-life scenes in the factory and the inn where the lighting and detail of composition are reminiscent of genre painting. His interest in how things work extends to observing craftsmen blowing glass, while the grotesque takes the form of a strip performed by the village idiot on a table in the inn. There are indications that Herzog originally intended to heighten this local colour and emphasise the conventional narrative by ending *Heart of Glass* on the murder of the servant girl. But as the film now stands, it bears far more resemblance to a folk tale, with all the ellipsis and irrationality that the supernatural element allows. It is not even a film about visions, but a film of visions which are realised by Hias and articulate all the sequences. It opens with his view of mists rolling down a mountain valley like the waters of the deluge, and closes with his projection of lonely men standing on a remote outcrop in the sea gazing westward as a small boat sets out from the old world on a doomed expedition into the future. Because of this, *Heart of Glass* is a film in which point of view is systematically blurred—is it what Hias sees? is it what really happens?—but which has the irrational logic of dreams. Herzog is the sworn enemy of intellectualism and claims that the cinema has more to do with popular entertainment than with scholarship. So *Heart of Glass* might be seen as another attempt to recapture the naiveté of *Kaspar Hauser*, and to recreate the folk mentality through the productions of what is literally a dream factory.

There is no doubt that *Heart of Glass* is marked by Herzog's private obsessions: grotesques and overreaches especially. It may be no accident that the factory owner lusts for ruby glass as a vampire lusts for blood, but it is nevertheless a very oblique attack on property. It is also tempting to see the film as a recapitulation of the German Romantic tradition. But beyond any interpretation, what makes it stunning are the moments when Herzog stops filming and



'Annie Hall': Diane Keaton, Woody Allen

starts to paint. Sometimes Hias is the shepherd reclining in the corner of a Romantic landscape with, behind him, torrents and ravines straight from John Martin; sometimes he is the hiring shepherd looking into a distance composed of streaks of Pre-Raphaelite gaudiness; and most often he is St. Jerome musing on the emblems of mortality. Herzog is far too much of a maverick to allow us to see universal significance in these moments. He is very much the visionary outsider that Hias is. But it's the vision that counts in the end.

JILL FORBES

Annie Hall

'What do you want—it's my first play!' the comedian and fledgling dramatist Alvy Singer announces to us after we've witnessed a rehearsal extract limply recapitulating a previous exchange between the author and his girl friend Annie Hall—with a happy ending ineptly replacing the real life split up. In some ways, *Annie Hall* (United Artists) is Woody Allen's first film as well; his technical and narrative assurance has reached a new level, and there has never before been so much concentration on the comic's own personality, outlook and phobias. But there is no parallel in quality between film and play: *Annie Hall* looks good (photographed by Gordon Willis), feels good, and is good; the jokes come thick and fast, and are all the more pleasurable for being deeply embedded in character and environment.

Allen's concerns and comic apparatus have been drastically simplified. The elaborate parody mechanisms of *Sleeper* and *Love and Death* are here abandoned; there is no impish visual recreation of science fiction landscapes, or Russian life as seen by one surfeited with Bergman and Tolstoy (in unreal translations). The setting in *Annie Hall* is largely Manhattan, its apartments, sidewalks, bookshops, tennis clubs, analysts' offices, restaurants, park benches and cinemas—all of which provide mainly neutral backgrounds for the verbal gymnastics of the leading couple. (The chief exception, of course, is the cinema queue at the New Yorker, where a brazen bore weighs into the Fellini film he saw last night—'it was not one of his best'—with a heavy artillery of clichés.) Outside Manhattan, however, the environments are seen through more satiri-

cal eyes: Alvy's Brooklyn home, beneath a roller-coaster; Annie's home in Wisconsin, straight from a Norman Rockwell painting; and, especially, the scenes in Los Angeles. 'It's like living in Munchkinland!' Alvy tells his friend and manager Rob (Tony Roberts). And so it seems: all is fakery and sunbaked glitter. A model Santa and reindeer sits out on a front lawn, a stray reminder of the Christmas season; Rob dubs flattering laugh-tracks on to a TV show; Paul Simon's softly-spoken record tycoon Tony Lacey presides over a social whirl whirling itself right into the clouds ('It's a great movie if you're high!' says a beaming dreamer slouched on a sofa, talking of *La Grande Illusion*—one could even imagine the bore from the New Yorker wincing at that).

There is a simple reason for these changes in treatment: Manhattan is the home ground of Allen's humour, and under its inspiration the verbal gags completely dominate over the visual. The topics, however, are all as before: like his forerunners Alvy is haunted by love and death, depression and psychoanalysis, the fact of being a Jew, the importance of literature and learning ('Just don't take any course where they make you read *Beowulf*,' he advises Annie), the cultural hogwash talked in cinema queues and at parties. But these topics have never been so clearly centred round Allen himself. For the rise of the bespectacled, slight, nervous comedian Alvy Singer directly parallels the rise of Woody Allen—a point made clear when Alvy performs before the University of Wisconsin using material (and a verbal delivery) derived from Woody's own days as a stand-up comic. Indeed, the concentration on Allen and the daily round of a New York Jewish comic makes one fear for the film's communicability, both now and in the future. Any English audience is already missing some points by being on the wrong side of the Atlantic; even New Jersey audiences, apparently, miss some points by being on the wrong side of the Hudson river—only a true Jewish New Yorker would react as Alvy does to Annie blithely ordering a meal of pastrami with white bread, salad and mayonnaise. No doubt Woody Allen will eventually be in the same situation as his idols the Marx Brothers, where the cascade of audience laughter periodically stops during puns on the names of local radio stations, long-forgotten popular songs and band leaders.

Yet behind this top layer of dazzling quips and their accompanying stylistic flourishes (ranging from a cartoon fantasy and thought-revealing subtitles to Alvy and Annie revisiting their past like characters out of Arthur Miller) there lies a solid foundation—the trials and tribulations of the comic outlook and its effect on human relationships. The correspondence between Alvy and Woody Allen is plain. But *Annie Hall*, the night club singer, and Diane Keaton also connect. Keaton shares her heroine's zany diffidence (Tony Roberts, who appeared with them in *Play It Again, Sam* on stage, categorised her as the kind who wakes up in the morning and immediately begins apologising), her own surname is Hall (Keaton being her mother's name), and she lived with Allen for a year in 1971. But there is nothing private about their relationship on screen. The scenes deftly describe the erratic processes of willing, sustaining and ending a love relationship. At their peak, any activity—like the accidental scattering of lobsters over a kitchen floor—becomes a cause for sparring and fooling. The two create a kind of energy and kinship that the other people in their lives—Carol Kane, Shelley Duvall, Annie's bearded actor ('Touch my heart with your foot!' he says, kneeling down)—never approach. But the energy is fitful and sputters to a sad close; their relationship needs to move, Alvy says, or it will die, like a shark. 'I think what we've got on our hands is a dead shark!' he says on the plane going back to New York from Los Angeles. Soon afterwards Annie flies back, to Tony Lacey, and Alvy is left displaying his comic frenzy with lobsters before a long-legged beauty who apologises for

not understanding. When comedians mirror their own habits and frustrations without the customary distortions of invented characters and plots, the results are usually more embarrassing than funny. Woody Allen, however, has miraculously made his most personal film his funniest.

GEOFF BROWN

Before Hindsight

Before Hindsight (BFI), by Jonathan Lewis and Elizabeth Taylor-Mead, is a welcome introduction to what was and was not filmed by newsreels and documentary film-makers in the 1930s and why; and therefore to what limitations may be imposed on our understanding when we produce our own visual history of that time. Not that this was necessarily their principal intention, or even one of their major preoccupations. They were more concerned, if I understand them correctly, to help us understand the coverage of events provided by our own television services in our own time than they were to produce an annotated filmography of non-fiction films of the decade before the Second World War—but the filmography itself provides a useful point of departure for anyone interested in learning about the sources of our visual knowledge of the 30s.

Their film is organised chronologically, beginning in 1931 and ending in 1939. It has a presenter, James Cameron. Its body consists of clips from newsreel stories, excerpts from well known and not so well known documentaries, and brief extracts from films made by the Socialist Film Council and the Film and Photo League, newly brought to light by Jonathan Lewis himself. The whole is commented, sometimes anecdotally, sometimes more reflectively, by George Elvin, then Secretary of the ACT, Edgar Anstey, a March of Time executive in the late 30s, Ivor Montagu, a Communist film-maker, Jonathan Dibleby, a present-day television journalist, and, most strikingly, Leslie Mitchell and Gerald Sanger, commentator and editor respectively of British Movietone News.

What emerges from their testimony is that the newsreels of the 30s were part of the entertainment industry. Their proprietors were politically conservative and commercially cautious; they eschewed controversial subjects, and when they treated controversial subjects tried to do so in a non-controversial manner, which often meant trivialising them. As a consequence newsreels failed to give a lead in the struggle against Hitler, or for rearmament, or any of the other things we can, with hindsight, see we ought to have done.

What emerges as well is the earnestness and conscientiousness of their left-wing opponents, their poverty, their frustration at seeing their best films excluded from the commercial distribution networks—and the extent to which their own products shared the production values of the films made by their commercial adversaries. Now, none of this is new or surprising except, apparently, to James Cameron, whose sense of outrage at the concordance of views between a popular conservative government and newsreels controlled by supporters of that government is seemingly inexhaustible. What is novel, is the variety of examples Elizabeth Taylor-Mead and Jonathan Lewis have found to illustrate this not very controversial thesis and the quality of the interviews they have obtained. Thus the audience can marvel at the breathtaking ignorance of Pathé's commentator who thought that Hitler's propaganda minister was a man named Doctor Guhbells; wince at the invincible obtuseness of a BBFC which refused to certify *Free Thälmann*, Ivor Montagu's film about the Communist leader imprisoned by the Nazis without trial, on the grounds that he wouldn't be in prison if he weren't a criminal

and no film could be shown glorifying criminals; and try to puzzle out why George Bernard Shaw should have been persuaded that the re-introduction of conscription was the very best news to have come out of Germany in a long time.

The audience can see unfamiliar material as well: a Paramount story unreleased because in it Wickham Steed repeats an observation which provoked the suppression of a previous interview; an artless 'Workers Newsreel' which bends the Hendon Air Show to the service of international working class pacifism; a spine-chilling—unreleased—1937 interview with Sir Oswald Mosley on the subject of anti-semitic violence and foreign affairs which shows to all who have eyes to see why no controversies about his attitudes during the 30s can be satisfactorily settled by reference to the printed texts of what he said; and a suppressed Paramount interview with Harold Nicolson at the time of Munich which reveals him as a tough, intelligent political speaker with a striking screen presence. The film would have been worth making if it had done nothing more than bring such documents out of the archives and on to our screens. But it has done more. Jonathan Lewis had the good sense to interview two men who can speak from experience about newsreel production; and here again, it is not what they say so much as the authority with which they say it which makes their contribution so important.

Gerald Sanger puts a sour controversy about the political responsibility of newsreels to rest by saying he does not think anyone will be surprised if he is to say that conventions were 'sterner and more guarded' than those of today, and saying (not 'admitting') that he had no hesitation about accepting the attitudes of the press and 'applying them to our own smaller area of influence.' Leslie Mitchell candidly passes on (after forty years it is hardly an indiscretion) the advice given him not to worry about trying to improve the newsreels since their proprietors regarded them as only an item which was served up along with the feature films as part of total service to cinemas. There is not a trace of self-pity nor any self-serving attempts to rewrite history in either interview; each, in its own way, gives the lie to the idea that no man of the 30s can explain

himself without condemning himself from his own mouth.

The one regret is that so little is seen and heard of either Mr. Sanger or Mr. Mitchell—particularly in view of the amount of screen time devoted to James Cameron. For, admirable though it is, *Before Hindsight* has a substantial defect, and that is the reliance it places on its presenter. James Cameron has an enviable reputation for intelligent toughness; but in this film his mannered delivery and vaporous sense of history encourages any spectator with prior knowledge of the period systematically to mistrust what he says. The danger is that since much of what he says is based on the film-makers' admirably thorough research, their good sense is liable to get lost in a morass of bad metaphysics ('The film medium, for a variety of reasons, seeks to achieve a version of truth through a process of "balance", as they call it . . . somehow arriving at the synthesis of what it argues is reality'), bad history ('The first time the English establishment started to take Hitler seriously was when he suddenly claimed back the ex-German colonies') and moralising ('The simple fact is that the newsreels were run by people who knew nothing whatever about news and everything about easy options').

A second defect, apparently trivial, has untrivial implications; newsreel film clips are identified by issuing company, and documentaries by titles, but neither by date of release. Since separate clips are often grouped together, the audience is liable to believe that they were made or exhibited simultaneously when they may in fact have been shown over periods of several months. A related problem arises from grouping together documentaries made by the Left and newsreels. Though George Elvin explicitly says that such documentaries were shown non-commercially, he does not emphasise the point and so there too an unalerted audience may carry away the idea that *Peace and Plenty* (or, indeed, *We Live in Two Worlds*) were seen as widely as the *March of Time*, or *British Movietone News*.

For most of its length—and with these reservations—*Before Hindsight* is a well made, consistently viewable one-joke film. But the joke—How they got it wrong in the 30s—like all the best jokes, turns against those who laugh the loudest. The sting in the tail is the

'Before Hindsight': Gerald Sanger, British Movietone News Editor, in his office in the late 1930s



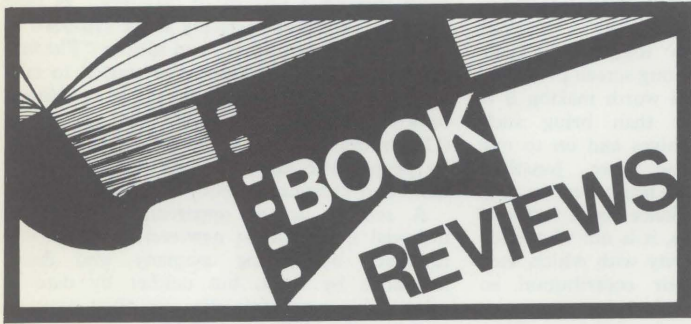
final interview with Jonathan Dimpleby, whom viewers of *This Week* will recognise as a conscientious professional television journalist. Dimpleby argues that television journalism in our own time is dominated by the idea that reporters discharge their obligation to seek the truth by faithfully reporting contrasting views. But, says Mr. Dimpleby, everything depends on the point of departure from which the contrasting views are sought. He believes that in two specific cases—the South African Republic's policy of apartheid, and the British Government's policy towards Northern Ireland—British television's point of departure is grotesquely misplaced. Northern Ireland is a colonial problem and is not a question of

trying to bring peace to a divided British community. Apartheid is a moral evil, not a social policy with dark sides and positive aspects.

'My fear,' says Dimpleby, 'is that when our successors look back on the coverage of events in South Africa and events in Northern Ireland by the British media, they will look back with the same kind of dismay that now we look back on the way the cinemas covered the events in the 30s in Germany...' And who will deny the truth of what he says? But his harsh prediction is not quite the whole story, and it is not the least of the merits of *Before Hindsight* that it contains within itself the reasons why. Despite James Cameron's lofty dismissal of those who

practise 'self-censorship—the accepted cop-out of the coward', the truth of the matter, as Leslie Mitchell and Gerald Sanger make clear, is that newsreel professionals were neither cop-outs nor cowards, but serious professionals working in a demanding business, who were neither exceptionally foresighted nor exceptionally culpable. When an older—or another—Jonathan Lewis produces an honest visual guide to the television of the 1970s, that account, if it is made with the help of interviewees like Jonathan Dimpleby, will show audiences of the 21st century how it was possible to work in a demanding, difficult business without necessarily becoming either a coward or a cop-out.

JERRY KUEHL



JOURNEY TO A LEGEND AND BACK: The British Realistic Film

Edited by Eva Orbanz

EDITION VOLKER SPIESS, BERLIN

'The working class is given a language and a means of expression...' This claim on behalf of documentary and 'realistic' film-making—a claim which will astonish most practitioners in the field—is made early in *Journey to a Legend and Back*. It is soon challenged with a counter-proposition: that the value of documentary as an expression of working-class interests is undermined by the middle-class (hence elitist) bias of its personnel. This has a seductive credibility until we ask what it actually means. If it means that the institutions responsible for documentary output recruit from the middle class, then it is true only if we consider non-directors non-creative—an attitude which itself betrays a class prejudice. If, on the other hand, it means that documentary film-makers are middle-class by virtue of their function within the social nexus, then it surely needs to be subordinated (if the argument is not to be merely circular) to a consideration of the social determinations of production.

The above propositions form, I think it is fair to say, the twin poles around which the diverse material of this book has been organised—consisting, as it does, mainly of interviews with people involved in documentary film-making from the late 20s to the present. If the primary assumptions remain unargued, this is perhaps in keeping with the commitment to the interview technique, which tends always to elicit either the raw material or the detritus of serious thought. The style of the book, in

fact, is very similar to that of a documentary film in its concern, by retaining the chronological structure of the inquiry and cementing it with 'diary' links, to respect the circumstantial origins of its arguments. What it attempts, and achieves with liveliness and humour, is a montage portrait of a tradition from the multiple perspectives of those who have participated in it.

In view of its German provenance (it was written and compiled by Eva Orbanz of the Berlin Kinemathek with the aid of compatriots in the documentary movement), the book is surprisingly insular, and seems never to entertain the possibility that any of us may have been influenced by the early work of Franju, Resnais, Rouch, etc. or by the theories of Zavattini or by the 'black documentaries' which emerged from Poland after 1956. And whilst the montage method throws up some unexpected associations—e.g. a parallelism between Roger Graef and John Grierson in their perception of film as neutral 'information' and as 'education for citizenship'—it is a perhaps equally accidental consequence of the personal witness format that the tradition is in danger of being presented as a sort of apostolic succession in which people simply develop or react against the work of their immediate predecessors. The living tradition, however, consists in the relationships which we now posit between its past elements, rather than those which may have been perceived as obtaining at the time.

But a deeper and more worrying consequence of this general stance is that people's work tends to be drawn back towards, almost subsumed within, their personality and situation. The test case is

perhaps Humphrey Jennings. It is justifiable for Stuart Hood to observe that Jennings, as a traditionalist from the mainstream of bourgeois culture, presents a view of the British people which is 'blind to the tensions underlying the official picture of "one nation"'. But to assign his achievement to some purely aesthetic realm, as Klaus Wildenhahn seems prepared to do, is to imply a distinction between the aesthetic and the social which is unacceptable. Those of us who respond to Jennings' work, seeing precisely in his negation of society's contradictions something which the *status quo* can accommodate only as an outrage, an act of gentle terror, are faced with the choice between ruling evidence of his social background inadmissible or repudiating our own responses.

This takes us to a still more fundamental question, in that the built-in emphasis upon people's accounts of their own work tends to relegate to indifference the viewer's response to it, so that this becomes almost undiscussable. Only at one point is there a breach in this wall of silence. Commenting on the BBC's alleged fear that the documentary manner of *Rank and File* might lead people to suppose they were watching a real event, Charles Stewart remarks, 'The argument against this would be that you actually are watching a real event.' To pursue this insight, with its implication that viewers have choice in the modalities of representation, would lead the discussion on to a terrain which is undeniably treacherous but whose neglect unites the manipulators of our cultural institutions with those anti-humanists of latter-day Marxism for whom the individual is at best a victim, at worst a mere epiphenomenon, of the play of ideologies.

To return, then, to the notions of class which inform this book: somewhere in the ground-plan, it seems to me, there is a 'but' facing the wrong way. By this I mean that I would find more convincing a development in the direction: 'British documentary has always been a middle-class form, but the subversive potential of images of working-class life underwritten by the guarantees of the documentary ethos cannot readily be measured.' In other words, the mere existence of documentary, in its affront to

literary/narrative perception, may at one time have outweighed its apparent conservatism—just as today its apparent radicalism is outweighed by a blandness which demands of the viewer no fresh response, no new appropriation of the world through the film's mediacy.

In some ways, though, my strictures are inappropriate. Jim Allen's concluding autobiographical fragment, at first sight apparently irrelevant, is in fact crucial in setting the entire book in perspective, since it summons up a world of experience which the British documentary has totally excluded. The failing of the documentary movement lay in the cumulative weight of its omissions; and, since these cannot be laid at the door of the individual work, the apparatus of criticism is powerless to reveal it. We can expose the shortcomings of the documentary tradition only by talking about something else.

DAI VAUGHAN

OUR FILMS, THEIR FILMS

By Satyajit Ray

LONGMAN ORIENT, MADRAS, Rs.20.00

'Our films', of course, are Indian films and the films of Satyajit Ray himself; 'their films' are from the rest of the world. The us and them division certainly implies no cultural separatism, let alone élitism, on Ray's part, but it does indicate that the book is directed largely to the attention of an Indian public—successfully, it would seem, since it has already gone through two printings before arriving in its present paperback form. There is certainly no need for the publishers to be so timid about the reactions of the 'them' part of the public, though; this gathering of Ray's scattered essays and reviews over nearly thirty years makes charming and often illuminating reading for anyone interested in films in general or Ray in particular.

The most cherishable are the autobiographical pieces in which Ray describes his principles of film-making and how he has put them into practice. In 'Some Aspects of My Craft' (1966) he explains with a deceptive air of simple practicality why he writes, designs, composes and even works

as his own operator on his films, as though this is the easiest thing in the world and really anyone could do it. Elsewhere he goes into detail about how he made particular scenes in his films, with a wealth of sometimes bizarre illustration: 'If you want Chinese extras (as I did, in *Aparajito*) for a shot that lasts a minute and a half, it may land you in a Chinese brothel, where you sit in the anteroom—dark and dark as a primordial cave—the smell of opium stifling your nostrils, while Madam saunters in and out showing her yellowing teeth in a smile of hopeful invitation. The promised extras take hours to show up, but you are stuck not just because there is blinding rain outside, but because you hope to get the shot as you planned it.'

Of particular interest for outsiders are Ray's reactions to other Indian film-making, especially the hinted, long hoped for New Wave in Indian cinema represented by directors like Shyam Benegal, Mani Kaul and Kumar Shahani. Ray, being on the spot and knowing very well the context in which their films must be seen at home, is neither dismissive, like most of the old guard of the Hindi cinema, nor over-indulgent, as maybe foreigners have tended to be, to a point verging on the patronising. He is able to tell us just how deliberate Kaul's choice of style is in *Dwidha*, and just what he thinks is wrong with it, in a way that no Western critic, seeing the film at some festival, could hope to do. And if he does see signs of hope for a creative new cinema in India, despite the limitations of what has emerged so far, his is a word we can take seriously.

In one of the autobiographical pieces he tells us how his stock answer to the question of influences used to be Renoir, Flaherty and Donskoi. (More recently, he says, he got bored with this and refers instead to classical Sanskrit dramatists and 18th century German composers.) In the course of his writings about non-Indian cinema, which tend to be rather less interesting for non-Indian readers, we get to hear how he was able personally to approach those original idols. With Flaherty it was through Flaherty's widow, whom he had some difficulty disillu-sioning with the news that his casts were not 'real people' but actors and children from sophisticated urban life styles. Renoir he met very early on, when *The River* was in preparation, and describes in the essay which first introduced his name to Western readers when it appeared in *Sequence* in 1950. Donskoi did not cross his path until he was on the jury in Moscow in the early 1960s. Questioned on the subject, Ray equivocated nervously about the quality of the Russian films in competition. Donskoi had no illusions; he slapped Ray heartily on the back and assured him 'You don't have to hide—not from me.' One would like to know the rest of the conversation between the creator of the Gorki Trilogy and the creator of

the Apu Trilogy. Perhaps in another book Ray will tell us—though one hopes it will be many years until he can take enough time off film-making to write it.

JOHN RUSSELL TAYLOR

KEATON

By Daniel Moews

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA PRESS,
£8.95 (paperback £2.95)

Daniel Moews' book is subtitled 'The Silent Features Close Up', and he describes his purpose as being that of viewing Keaton's independent features 'in a sufficiently objective and detailed way to reveal them—to demonstrate exactly what they are about and why they are funny.' This is an admirable enough objective: there is certainly room in the field of Keaton scholarship for a further, more analytical work to accompany Rudi Blesh's biography and David Robinson's Cinema One volume. But Mr. Moews' book is not the one to do it. Lacking in depth and short on lucidity, it did not seem to me to provide much new insight into Keaton's work.

Much of this failure is due to the book's structure: an introductory chapter followed by a series of descriptions of the films from *Our Hospitality* to *Steamboat Bill, Jr.*, stopping short of the MGM features. This is a mistake: *The Cameraman* and *Spite Marriage* are undoubtedly flawed works, but nevertheless retain a considerable continuity with the earlier films; the nature of their failure therefore provides major clues to an understanding of the other films' success. More serious still is the unexplained failure to deal with *The Three Ages*—an omission that seems both arbitrary and foolish. Apart from its significance as Keaton's first independent feature, *The Three Ages* is, as a spoof of Griffith's *Intolerance*, one of the major examples of Keaton's use of parody—a subject that deserves more than cursory discussion. In one of the more interesting sections of the book, Moews correctly identifies *Our Hospitality* as a parody melodrama preceded by a prologue of genuine melodrama 'so starkly tragic that it seems an unlikely prelude to laughter.' But he fails to develop the point, either by looking in depth at how *Our Hospitality* operates as parody, or by cross-referring it to other films. I would like to have seen a discussion of the element of parody in, for example, the first shot of Annabelle Lee in *The General*, where she appears in front of a white picket fence and a trellis of roses; Moews simply refers in passing to the 'sentimental domesticity' of this shot.

The book's chapter-per-film formula is stifling. Moews rarely cross-refers to other Keaton films, and practically never relates Keaton's work to other films of the period. (The first chapter

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includes the astonishing assertion that 'The American accomplishment... was largely restricted to comedy.' Instead he provides a series of plodding, though undeniably detailed, narrations of Keaton's plots. Such conclusions as he does draw range from the banal to the bizarre. His chapter on *Seven Chances*, for example, is devoted to arguing that the film was for Keaton 'his movie about women's liberation', that the huge crowd of would-be brides seen racing through the streets to the church are rebelling against a repressive social order and that the final chase is 'a joyous revelation of their triumphant strength'. It does not take a particularly sophisticated analysis to see that this is nonsense: the brides typify one of the most traditional of sexist stereotypes, the frustrated spinster, and their presentation *en*

masse is not essentially different from the stampede of cattle in *Go West*.

The depressing conclusion is that Daniel Moews typifies those woolly academics who, at heart, don't really believe that film is a respectable medium, and hence have a tendency to draw parallels with literature when they want to praise. It comes as no surprise to find the chapter on *Steamboat Bill, Jr.* comparing the film in rapid succession to Greek myth, Yeats, Keats, *Black Orpheus*, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull*, Dostoevsky, Taoist monks, John Bunyan, Coleridge, T. S. Eliot, Shelley, Carlos Castañeda and Hermann Hesse. Moews refers to this in his preface as 'fulsome praise'. It is an unprofitable approach, and does no service to Keaton's films.

ALLAN T. SUTHERLAND



Group 3

SIR,—In Memoriam: Group 3... I had three affairs with this production source (of which so much was expected) that are not perhaps without interest today.

1. At Grierson's request, I helped him to prepare his memorandum to the Treasury via the National Film Finance Corporation in 1951. (I had recently finished *No Resting Place* as a feature film made wholly on location in Eire.)

2. Shortly after Group Three was set up, Grierson invited me to the Southall Studio and asked if I would co-script with Monty Slater and then direct a film about the then Great North Road, its truck drivers, girls and cafés. We delivered the script on time. Grierson asked me if I could be ready to start shooting in the studio in two weeks. This foxed me because the script inevitably called for 98 per cent location work. 'Oh, no,' said John, 'we'll revive the great old days of UFA and build the Great North Road in the studio.' The film was never made.

3. Later, Grierson called to say that he had a story about an American deserter on the run in the East End. I read and liked it but it called for a good American actor. John Garfield happened to be in town. He also liked the story and agreed to stay in England and make the film for a mere pittance plus a percentage. I fixed for Grierson to meet Garfield. Grierson never turned up. Garfield flew back to the U.S.A.,

where he took his life as a result of Un-American Activities harassment. The film was never made.

There is no greater admirer of Grierson's talents than I am, but producing feature films was not one of them.

Yours faithfully,

PAUL ROTH

Moreton Thame, Oxon.

Ealing's Laurels

SIR,—The late Barnett Freedman (designer of the Ealing trademark) was not only an artist of considerable reputation but also a man with a highly developed sense of humour.

He might have been amused by Geoff Brown's reference (in his excellent article on Charles Barr's book—*SIGHT AND SOUND*, Summer 1977) to 'two stylised grains of wheat astride the words "Ealing Studios"'. Alas, the grains of wheat are supposed to be laurel leaves of classical design.

Yours faithfully,

MICHAEL BALCON

Hartfield, Sussex.

Cross of Iron

SIR,—Catching up with Richard Combs' review of *Cross of Iron* (*SIGHT AND SOUND*, Spring 1977), I am amazed to find that he and I appear to have seen different films. No praise for the inspired cutting of documentary material at the beginning; no disparagement of the lifeless script; no gibes at the punctual artillery blasts laid on to make Stransky ludicrous and later save the captured boy. No comment on the odds and ends which are inexplicable without reference to the book, such as Steiner's erudite quotations. No analysis of the extent to which the film simplifies, and perhaps purifies, the characters of both Stransky and Steiner.

And most surprising of all, no evaluation of the reminders of *The Wild Bunch*. The opening black and white slide change effects paralleling the *Bunch*'s opening freeze-frames; the children's voices at the beginning

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of each; the birthday party, contrasting with the restorative hours in a Mexican village; the hurtling, bleeding bodies in slow motion; the march towards destruction, with beating drum, of 'nine men who came too late and stayed too long'; the final 'Homeric' male laughter. Richard Combs mentions the Russian boy saved by Steiner and later killed by Russian fire. He does not say that the enigmatic script and the captive's fresh unisex beauty, amid grubby middle-aged Wehrmacht soldiery, leave one momentarily baffled and disoriented.

It was in *Straw Dogs* that Sam Peckinpah took first to ponderous quotations from the world's classics. Certainly the Brecht quotation which closes *Cross of Iron* is chilling. But together with the newsreel material its effect is merely to make Brand, Steiner and Stransky look trivial fiction. I for one doubt whether Peckinpah's Germans are much better than his English yokels. And I doubt whether pretentious is too hard a word for the—on my part—eagerly awaited *Cross of Iron*.

Yours faithfully,

GRAHAM JONES

Sundrum, Ayr.

Newsreel Censorship

SIR,—I think Tony Aldgate allows himself to turn a guess into apparent fact when he writes (SIGHT AND SOUND, Summer 1977) about the Wickham Steed episode for Paramount's newsreel of September 22nd, 1938: 'Evidently Paramount felt his intended final words went too far.' The truth is that although one can ascertain from the script that the whole speech was not used even before the reel was withdrawn, one cannot tell why. In fact, in both the paperwork and on film the section he quotes is prefaced by the title 'Good Scenes', which seems to have been the heading used to hold footage not included in the reel for possible use later. This does not by any means imply self-censorship. When the newsreels really wanted to lose film, they took it out of the library. A trip to Visnews will reveal the disputed section to be there under Paramount library no. 7812; apparently the sole surviving footage from the controversial speech. Perhaps the reel was running too long, or the editor thought the piece repetitive. We cannot assume that political expediency was the sole or even the strongest influence on the 30s newsreels.

Yours faithfully,

JONATHAN LEWIS

Metropolis Pictures,
London, W.C.2.

Paul or Acres?

SIR,—In a letter published in SIGHT AND SOUND (Summer 1977), Tjitte de Vries claims to have uncovered fresh evidence in favour of Birt Acres concerning his part in the invention of cinematography in this country. In fact, the evidence he presents turns out to be matter already carefully

considered and fully documented in my book *The Beginnings of the Cinema in England*. I will deal in turn with the points raised by Mr. de Vries and also indicate the page numbers where the matter is referred to in my book:

(1) Ciné-camera by Birt Acres 1894-95, Science Museum (pp. 59 and 61). Here Mr. de Vries shows his inexperience by taking the museum caption as indisputable proof that the camera dates from the years stated on the card. I have carefully examined this camera and found it to date from late 1897 or early 1898. I have also suggested (p. 59) that it served as the prototype for the Birtac, patented by Birt Acres on 9 June 1898 (Pat. No. 12939). It was certainly never made or even dreamed of in 1894, for it makes use of a sprocket-wheel modelled on the type used in the Edison Kinetoscope which was only introduced to England in October 1894 and was not available to Acres before 1895. Furthermore, if the camera in question had been made in 1895, why was it that the camera he did patent in that year, the Kinetic Camera (Pat. No. 10747), used a much more primitive movement and construction? Mr. de Vries then becomes terribly confused and mentions two different machines, the camera made by R. W. Paul with the assistance of Acres (called by me the Paul-Acres Camera (pp. 19-36) and Paul's independently made camera of 1896 (pp. 27 and 28).

(2) The Birt Acres patent of 27 May 1895 (No. 10747) (pp. 57-60). The subject of this patent is the Kinetic Camera, and was the cause of the rift between Paul and Acres (pp. 33-6), as it embodied the salient features of the Paul-Acres Camera. Why Mr. de Vries mentions Paul's patent number 4686 in this context is beyond me, for this patent covers Paul's second Theatrograph projector (pp. 47-55).

(3) Birt Acres' copy of Talbot's *Moving Pictures* (p. 21). This book was published in 1912, so the relevant notes in Acres' hand were written at least seventeen years after the events to which they refer and by themselves cannot be accepted as proof of invention. Every historian knows how unreliable reminiscences invariably are.

(4) Here Mr. de Vries reveals his ignorance of British patent practice and again he confuses the issue. When a specification is accepted by the Patent Office, the issuing patent is printed and published by the Patent Office. The original document submitted by the patentee is then destroyed. Regrettable as this may be, we nevertheless still have the printed copy. But when a patent application is rejected by the Patent Office, or for some reason is not completed by the patentee, then the original document is destroyed without any printed record being kept. It is this latter practice which I abhor, since much valuable information is lost concerning the inventor. As for the matter Mr. de Vries quotes from Hopwood's *Living Pictures*, I have already shown that Hopwood was wrong in supposing that the Boat Race of

1895 was photographed with the Acres Kinetic Camera. It was indeed photographed by Birt Acres, but with the Paul-Acres Camera.

(5) That Birt Acres was the first to project cinematographic pictures upon a screen in England, has never been disputed by me. In fact, I give conclusive proof of this (p. 63). If Mr. de Vries thinks that the only evidence I present in Paul's favour is two quotations from Talbot and Ramsaye, then I suggest he reads my book again, but this time with a little more care.

Yours faithfully,

JOHN BARNES

Barnes Museum of
Cinematography,
St. Ives, Cornwall.

The Everyman

SIR,—David Thomson's article 'I Remember When it was a Cinema' (SIGHT AND SOUND, Summer 1977) was an enjoyable piece of evocative writing. However, I was very annoyed by his fifth paragraph which lists London's specialised cinemas. I wonder why he failed to include the Everyman Hampstead: the oldest repertory cinema in London, certainly the most

uncompromising in its aesthetic standards, and still a public cinema. Until recently I programmed the Everyman (so Mr. Thomson will know I'm biased), but I believe the Everyman's programmes have been far more adventurous than every cinema mentioned by Mr. Thomson with the possible exception of the Electric who, I'm sure, will be rather amused at finding themselves part of the 'academic film establishment'.

Yours faithfully,

ADRIAN TURNER

London, N.W.8.

Humphrey Jennings

SIR,—I am working on the papers of my father, the late Humphrey Jennings (1907-1950), the film director, painter and writer.

I should be most grateful if any of your readers who worked with him or knew him or who possess original material would write to me. Any papers sent to me would, of course, be copied and returned.

Yours faithfully,

MARY-LOU CLARKE

5 Ravenscourt Square,
London W6 OTW.

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

JILL FORBES teaches French at Loughborough University . . . KAROL KULIK is the author of *Alexander Korda: The Man Who Could Work Miracles* (W. H. Allen, 1975) and is at present the research librarian of the National Film School . . . VINCENT PORTER is an independent member of the Cinematograph Films Council . . . DAI VAUGHAN is a film editor and author of the recent BFI monograph *Television Documentary Usage* . . . VICTORIA WEGG-PROSSER is doing research on newsreels of the 1930s and is also producing a compilation film about the British in India . . . DON WILLIS is the author of *The Films of Frank Capra* and *The Films of Howard Hawks* (both Scarecrow Press) and has written for *Film Quarterly* . . . GEORGE WILSON is a member of the Department of Philosophy at the Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, Maryland, and also teaches classes on the aesthetics of film.

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20th CENTURY-FOX for *Star Wars*, *3 Women*, *Fellini's Casanova*, *Monkey Business*.
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METROPOLIS PICTURES for *Before Hindsight*, 1930s news photographs.
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SUNCHILD PRODUCTIONS for *Le Diable Probablement*.

BAVARIA ATELIER/S.F.P. for *Despair*.
TMS-FILM for *Hitler—a Film from Germany*.
ARTUS FILM/WELTVERTRIEB FILMVERLAG DER AUTOREN for *Das Brot des Bäckers*.
GERIA PRODUCTIONS/FRED HIFT for *Fedora*.
THAMES TELEVISION for *Rock Follies*.
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Film Guide



****ANNIE HALL** (United Artists)
A fit and relatively unharassed Woody Allen finally gets a grip on himself in this refreshingly controlled story of a Brooklyn Jewish boy and his consuming passion for an only slightly less neurotic tennis-playing WASP (Diane Keaton). Allen's most forthright work to date, with a string of memorably familiar comic set-pieces. (Tony Roberts.) *Reviewed.*

****BEST WAY TO WALK, THE** (Oppidan)
Claude Miller's first film, *La Meilleure Façon de Marcher*: set in a boys' summer camp and invading what was once Truffaut territory for a wryly funny, tenderly perceptive analysis of how humiliations, provoked by differences in class, character and sensibility, govern the way children grow up. (Patrick Dewaere, Patrick Bauchitey.) *Reviewed.*

BETWEEN FRIENDS

(Pleasant Pastures)
Affectedly downbeat tale of a group of petty criminals in chilly Toronto trying to get it together for one big hit. Director Donald Shebib unfortunately has pretensions above his material, and this story of post-adolescent dreams gone sour comes out strained and mannered. (Michael Parks, Bonnie Bedelia, Chuck Shamata.)

****BLACK SUNDAY** (CIC)
Blockbusting disaster movie about an attempt to explode a fragmentation bomb above the Miami football stadium. Despite a dashing approach, director John Frankenheimer on the whole fails to highlight a fantastical yarn with an injection of political realism. (Bruce Dern, Robert Shaw, Marthe Keller.)

****CADDIE** (Hemdale)
Noteworthy arrival from Australia: an affectionate account of a woman's attempt to live independently in the Sydney of the 20s and 30s. A little soft-centred, but the period background is persuasive and deceptively leisurely direction never lets the narrative flag. (Helen Morse, Takis Emmanuel, Jack Thompson; director, Donald Crombie.)

****COOLEY HIGH** (Brent Walker)
Routine script (young writer emerging Hollywood-bound from his black ghetto) given an unusual tang by the gift Michael Schultz demonstrated in *Car Wash* for ensemble playing and electrically rhythmic action. (Glynn Turman, Lawrence-Hilton Jacobs.)

DEMON SEED (CIC)

Donald Cammell, Nicolas Roeg's collaborator on *Performance*, turns solo director, and makes a fairly shoddy mess of this s-f fantasy crossing Women's Lib with Computer Lib. Julie Christie is held prisoner and eventually raped by a sweet-talking descendant of 2001's HAL, but their contest is reduced to cheap and quaintly old-fashioned thrills. (Fritz Weaver.)

***DEVIL'S PLAYGROUND, THE** (Columbia-Warner)
Feature film debut by Australian Fred Schepisi which makes sensitive, well-intentioned work of its account of life in a Catholic boys' seminary, with the inevitable crises of faith and puberty. A little predictable in its strategies and outcome, and a little monotonous in its constant dialogue on sex and the Church, but well performed and atmospherically shot. (Arthur Dignam, Nick Tate, Simon Burke.)

***ENTEBBE: OPERATION THUNDERBOLT** (EMI)
Menahem Golan's Israeli version of the Entebbe escape, less polished than Irvin Kershner's, but more authentically downbeat than its precursors, despite strikingly inept music by Dov Seltzer. The hostages, at least, behave like real people rather than Hollywood stereotypes. (Klaus Kinsky, Sybil Danning, Assaf Dayan.)

EQUUS (EMI)

Naturalistic rendering of Peter Shaffer's play, which sacrifices its superb theatrical coup (real horses take the place of stylised man-beasts) while preserving all the bombastic monologues of a doubting psychiatrist confronting primitive magic. (Richard Burton, Peter Firth, Colin Blakely; director; Sidney Lumet.)

EXORCIST II: THE HERETIC

(Columbia-Warner)
John Boorman's tame sequel to William Friedkin's brimstone shocker: a Vatican emissary (Richard Burton) tenaciously battles with an infernal spirit, made manifest in a locust swarm, for the possession of the dough-faced, adolescent Regan (Linda Blair). An earth-shaking finale fails to compensate for dull incidents of 'mind-travelling' hocus-pocus. (Louise Fletcher.)

***FELLINI'S CASANOVA** (Fox)
Donald Sutherland's Casanova wanders through the grotesque courts of 18th century Europe in a melancholy search for perpetual sexual gratification. Fellini's elegantly overblown pessimism is offset by a series of operatic, occasionally arresting studio sets (photographed by Giuseppe Rotunno.) (Tina Aumont, Adela Angela Lojodice.) *Reviewed.*

***FIRE SALE** (Fox)
Jewish black farce in the *Where's Poppa?* mould, with Alan Arkin directing himself as a failed basketball coach trying to save the family clothing store. Too frenetic to be consistently funny, but the accumulation of manic gags ultimately proves hard to resist. (Rob Reiner, Anjanette Comer, Kay Medford.)

***GREATEST, THE** (Columbia-Warner)
Hagiographic account of Cassius Clay's transformation into Muhammad Ali; but when the heavyweight champ takes over his own role, not a little tongue-in-cheek, he reveals touches of surprising skill as an actor. (Director, Tom Gries.)

GULLIVER'S TRAVELS (EMI)

Nominally based on the first episode of Swift's satire, this bonelessly inoffensive cartoon finds a benevolent Richard Harris unasily picking his way among the scheming Lilliputians. Lacklustre fusion of animation and live-action. (Director, Peter Hunt.)

****HEART OF GLASS** (Contemporary)
Werner Herzog's extraordinary experiment in hypnotising actors:

a visionary, utterly compelling intimation of apocalypse in which the entire film seems to be teetering on the brink of an abyss. (Josef Bierbichler.) *Reviewed.*

ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU, THE (Brent Walker)
Another excursion to H. G. Wells' sinister island, this one no more faithful to its original source than the 30s version, but also cursed with lush colour photography instead of black-and-white atmospheric and Burt Lancaster's stolid mania instead of Charles Laughton's manic zeal. (Michael York, Nigel Davenport; director, Don Taylor.)

****LONG HOLIDAYS OF 1936, THE** (Contemporary)
Moody portrait of a family caught holidaying near Barcelona at the start of the Spanish Civil War, and their various reactions to the encroaching dangers. A deceptively leisurely pace only sharpens the sense of a family life shaken but surviving. (Francisco Rabal, Concha Velasco, Ismael Merlo; director, Jaime Camino.)

MIDDLE OF THE WORLD, THE

(Artificial Eye)
More pre-cut, predigested political cinema from Alain Tanner. Always a laggard in intellectual fashions, Tanner seems to have just caught up with late 60s Losey, but this study in the politics of behaviour lacks Losey's ability to combine political psychology with narrative innovation. (Philippe Léotard, Olimpia Corlisi, Juliet Berto.)

NASTY HABITS (Scotia-Barber)

A satire on Watergate (from Muriel Spark's *The Abbess of Crewe*) devoid of bite because the format is both so obvious—campaigning for Abbess, Sister Glenda Jackson resorts to bugging and dirty tricks—and so inappropriate. Memorable only for Sandy Dennis, as a dithering John Dean nun finally arrested in a public lavatory dressed as a man. (Melina Mercouri, Geraldine Page, Anne Jackson, Rip Torn; director, Michael Lindsay-Hogg.)

**NEW YORK, NEW YORK

(United Artists)
More a Scorsese film than a musical, using the old Hollywood clichés to mourn the long-lost days of moral certainties, and switching—to brilliant, unsettling effect—the roles played by drama and music as another private inferno is discreetly explored. (Robert DeNiro, Liza Minnelli.) *Reviewed.*

ONE ON ONE

(Columbia-Warner)
Robby Benson's cliché-ridden script and self-satisfied performance as a college basketball prodigy undermines anything this film may have had to say about the American institution of athletic scholarship. In the end, it does no more than cash in on the current fashion for sporting themes. (G. D. Spradlin, Annette O'Toole; director, Lamont Johnson.)

ORCA ... KILLER WHALE (EMI)

Unhappy mating of *Moby Dick* and *Jaws*, with Richard Harris as a modern Ahab and Charlotte Rampling speaking up for ecology. Michael Anderson directs with more concern for sensational effects than the persecuted mammals, but there are more thrills to be found in the average dolphinarium. (Will Sampson, Kennan Wynn.)

OUTLAW BLUES

(Columbia-Warner)
Flaccid comedy with Peter Fonda (saintly beyond belief) as a convict-composer whose hit song is stolen by a nasty Nashville star, and who defies the police

to right his wrong, becoming haloed as a folk hero in the process. (Susan Saint James, James Callahan; director, Richard T. Heffron.)

SILVER BEARS (EMI)

Paul Erdman's ingenious tale of banking skulduggery is turned into a curiously down-beat romp (the all-star players do not so much throw away their humorous lines as affect to ignore them). Multiple tourist locations complement Ivan Passer's wilfully bland direction. (Michael Caine, Louis Jourdan, Stéphane Audran, David Warner.)

SINBAD AND THE EYE OF THE TIGER (Columbia-Warner)

Inept magical mystery tour in which even Ray Harryhausen's monsters, taking their cue from a scratch cast, give their worst performances in ages. (Patrick Wayne, Taryn Power, Margaret Whiting; director, Sam Wanamaker.)

*SLAP SHOT (CIC)

George Roy Hill's run of Newman/Redford charmers falters with this undeniably funny but time-serving attempt to condemn the incidence of violence in sport (here, minor league ice hockey) while exploiting it to the hilt. (Paul Newman, Michael Ontkean, Lindsay Crouse.)

*SMALL CHANGE (Gala)

Amusing, sometimes sentimental incidents in the lives of a class of youngsters from Thiers school provide Truffaut with the opportunity to put in a frankly moving appeal for brotherly love. A charming *jeu d'esprit* shedding additional light on the director's continuing preoccupation with childish innocence. (Jean-François Stévenin, Geory Desmoucaux, Philippe Goldmann.)

**SMOKEY AND THE BANDIT (CIC)

Familiar, but thanks to a bright script and engaging characters, very pleasant territory as boot-legger Burt Reynolds takes to the Southern highways pursued by an indignant sheriff (Jackie Gleason, nicely parodying the vigilante town-tamer of recent myth). (Sally Field, Jerry Reed; director, Hal Needham.)

SPY WHO LOVED ME, THE

(United Artists)
Christopher (Confessions) Wood provides the schoolboy humour as Bond teams up with KGB cutie to save the world from the lacklustre machinations of Curt Jürgens. The plot is ramshackle, the set-pieces derivative, though 7 ft. 2 ins. heavy Richard Kiel is good for a few laughs. (Roger Moore, Barbara Bach; director, Lewis Gilbert.)

**3 WOMEN (Fox)

With pixillated colours and textures, and diamond-hard performances from Shelley Duvall and Sissy Spacek, Robert Altman conjures a strange vision of Californian desert civilisation: some far outpost of consumer society declining (or evolving) into more primitive forms. An intriguingly ambiguous scene, until it is abruptly overtaken by the psycho-drama of *Images*. (Janice Rule.) *Reviewed.*

**WELCOME TO L.A. (Lagoon Associates)

Almost impossibly arch evocation of the 'city of the one night stands', somehow saved by the teasingly ambiguous performances of some of producer Robert Altman's stock company (under the spy direction of Altman associate Alan Rudolph) and moodily abstract photography of the city itself. (Keith Carradine, Sally Kellerman, Geraldine Chaplin, Harvey Keitel.)



John Baxter

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